

ROSE ACRE PAPERS

EDWARD THOMAS



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Rose Acre Papers

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

REST AND UNREST
OXFORD
BEAUTIFUL WALES
THE HEART OF ENGLAND
LIFE OF RICHARD JEFFERIES
THE SOUTH COUNTRY

Rose Acre Papers

Including Essays from
“Horae Solitariae”

By

Edward Thomas

Author of
“Rest and Unrest”



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Most of the chapters in this book are reprinted from my "Horæ Solitariæ," first published in 1902. "An Autumn House" and "Rain" formed part of a little book entitled "Rose Acre Papers." All were written between 1898 and 1901.

E. T.

Caryatids

THE oriel surveys an angular plain of roofs—blue slate, auburn tile-work, grizzled stone—and soaring thence a steeple, the clustered masonry at its base inhabited and ever guarded by sad crowned women, with faces lifted skyward. Very likely these are saints, perhaps martyrs; but I never heard their legend from the pigeon that sways about them, or the wind that sharpens the angles of their faces. Night after night I see them, and after many vigils, whilst bells are calling to each other above us, and night closes over the placid city, faces seen in the enchanted past reappear, faces of men and women like Caryatids, and close kin to these guardians of the spire, among cloud and star. Nor

Caryatids

merely faces I have seen, but the long-enduring I have read of also. One by one—as I watch the queenly stone figures, wrought upon by the magic of distance and lofty place (nearer the stars than we!)—such faces emerge from the past, with more of the uncomplaining benedictionless. These are the Caryatids of life. Fearful burdens rest on their tender necks. Yet one sees not wherefore they should undergo so much, any more than should the Caryatids that bear mountains of carven stone. Silent, immobile, like Caryatids, their palms are crossed with tearless supplication on their bosoms. Children, too, are of their number. . . .

Go one humming May afternoon to the fields, along a sweet and wildsome pathway startled by your footfalls—from which you may fancy you hear the wounded note of a spirit of the spot escaping. Out of sight, bees are noisy in the willow top. On almost leafless blackthorns the blossom is delicate

Caryatids

like summer snow. And the foliage of lime and poplar is heavy scented, after rain ; the blackbird's note is mellow for it. . . . Those children crowning themselves with coils of docile bryony, with flowers between, and now running toward a tuneless voice of command in the distance—they are Caryatids. Farther on, I used to meet an idiot, day after day, holding in leash a pair of divine, chestnut horses. He is kind, fraternally kind, to the field creatures ; and they to him, in return. They are indeed his only pleasure, his sole interest. Also he is more truly related to them than you might think. Not one of their voices there is he will not copy—the whew of plovers, the bullfinch's delicate, internal soprano, the sob of unchilled otters—and especially the hiss of snakes. His sense of smell is fine and undeceivable. I never heard a sigh from him ; for he seems to have no longings, no regrets ; the source of tears has run dry, since the time when children baited and derided him pitilessly.

Caryatids

Yet he draws from solitude a kind of satisfaction, like a mere herb, or like a solitary fir on a peak, whose very life is the west wind, by which it was shapen. I think of him—I am not certain wherefore—as a martyr, a saint, notwithstanding that he might rather seem little above the trees he equals in tranquillity. But Wordsworth alone, with his power of assigning to the humblest their unique, proper niche in the scheme of things, could fitly write of him. Who else could so well follow at a few yards an hour the grazing horses? He also, though not exempt from the blithe ministries of the south wind to flower and plant, is among the Caryatids.

Or come on a dead, bleak day in February, when the trees moan as if they covered a tomb—and they do cover a tomb, the tomb of the voices, the “thrones and dominations” of summer past. The rabbits are housed. Dead as soon as born, the first lesser celandine puts forth one flower. Now and

Caryatids

then a bird crosses the sky with a shriek. So day follows day; and night is so dark that the heavens seem a mirage of earth. On such a day the only light in the prospect is the white bonnet of a grandmother, creeping wearily over the interminable ploughlands alone, picking up stones. She sings a song, and her soul has already gone forward into the silenees. At this season, year after year, she is there—she—or another—keeping the generations of undespairing sorrow unbroken. And she, too, is among the Caryatids.

Along with these are the faees of other field women. . . . On the Downs we heard the reapers chanting a song in the motionless eorn. All day they reaped, reaped, and never turned to behold the sun, in whose rebounding beams their faces whitened, whilst their napes and shoulders beeame brown as they stooped. Sometimes they seemed to hail the sun with wistful pity for their babes, and even for the feverish blossoms. To the sun, which had been graeious to them all the year, and

Caryatids

now was eruel, they were praying that he would still be kind; for then, after he was gone, or at least when they saw him not, in the muffled winter, they would suspend a fruited branch of his own ripening over the chimney-piecee, thankfully in memoriam; or if he would not listen, they seemed to say, in half-laughing indignation, they would evoke a rain-shower that should veil his glory before evening, or trample upon his triumphs at dawn. But evermore the burden was—that the sun would lightly deal with the hills where the reapers reaped, as with the valleys where he raised up a beatifie haze. Now charging angrily at the corn rows with sickles, now resting a minute, the reapers presently disappeared in the gulfs they hewed. The women piled the harvest in shining heaps, and after nightfall travelled home, Caryatid-like, with children upon their arms, a faggot upon their heads, and the wreck of sunset was scattered round them with a pomp which in human things we should eall grandiose.

Caryatids

There are many more. There is, for instance, the flower-seller, with a step always as soft as if she feared to wake a sleeper—who yesterday, as she passed along the riverside carrying early honeysuckle and fritillaries in a basket on her head, refused to sell her flowers, and for one day at least seemed to prefer hunger to parting with what had brought her to that reedy, tranquil riverside. There are many more; but the night grows late; and the thoughts travel beyond the city, to where the wind-earven firs line the hilltop in open order, against the blanched sky. Now deepens the peace of all those trees that veil so much in their hushed mantles of foliage, though if we enter among them, all will have gone. . . . It is a still midnight in white and black. In the sky there are several lonely stars; one or two, no more; and even these wither, one at a time, behind invisible cloud, as if refined by a gradual retreat into distance. So grand the silence, the nightingale dares not sing; only

Caryatids

now and then its voice leaps forth—like a sigh from the breast of the silence; the vasty night heaves through and through; the birch tree sprays rise and fall once, and are still.

Exiles at Play

FOR a little time, we turned aside into a circuit of brown walls. They and two aerial, pointed arches were the remains of a famous abbey: and it was pleasant still to lie under a tall, gracious linden, that stood on the site of the west front. Several Welsh maidens joined us presently. They were very sprightly, setting free their hair, singing, and laughing continually. One climbed the wall, and posing motionless in a niche, made an effective Madonna; only her tresses were blown over her face, like wings. But it was a plaintive place—the generous Catholic and Apostolic oven cold and ruinous—desolate the great barn wherein the winnowing fan rose and fell murmurously, and the dust

Exiles at Play

was gilded all day, seen through the open door. Nevertheless, we paced in faney down umbrageous, overtraceried cathedral aisles. In faney we spied the carver of that celandine flower on the hidden face of a slab, with the legend : *Jam mens prætrepidans avet vagari.* We heard in faney the dewy voiees of the choir singing together lonesomely.

On the walls and about the still perfumed linden a glow was tarrying as we left. It was an amber fervid evening. In the placid, breathless sunset, over the colours of the sky folded a harmonizing mist. Footsore wayfarers now and again found a pretext for turning round to take a last look at the sun. All the world gazed westwards ;—on the gate of many a cottage lay a long white hand, growing transparent in the sad light, and looking wonderful against the torrid blue sky ; and the unquiet stars seemed to hang in their black hair as the women lingered. A waggon or two glided along the horizon. The

Exiles at Play

poplars, that all day had sung and shivered busily, "with a sound of showers," muffled their heads, put on a cloak of silence and gloom. We expected words like diamonds or fine gold from our host ; but he answered in Welsh, which was a seeond best. Until the hour for candles, we listened to Welsh songs, devised sweetly about the streams and hills of the very place where we lay. Then the moon gave the word : *Monte dans la tour d'ivoire et advienne que pourra.* And this was my dream.

Low, massy, and in colour auburn, the full moon was perched upon a hill-top, very near ; etched in black on its surface was the skeleton of an elm. To the cottager moving in his orchard it hung like a great fruit, upon each tree in turn. The rooks, even yet, were crossing the sky from side to side, straight to the moon. We kept it in sight until it grew pallid and frail in the cold wind, and rose in the eentre of its hazy circles, pent in like some white maiden by a magieian's lines, for

Exiles at Play

ever haunted by the pale grey and crocus circles. Before us lay a broad estuary—moon-enriched, and presently like an even silver trencher, with tree shadows upon it like islets of ebony. A little starry rivulet flowed past us. And on one hand a long road wound upward, shining white, to the top of a hill, and then—the moon, with all her stars. . . . This road—and the wind that traded in freshest perfumes—enticed us forth. It passed near to the abbey; and on the way, we met nobody. Not even an owl was abroad.

Now and then a leaf fidgeted. A butterfly slept on a branch, like a flower.

The abbey was faintly lighted by torches, upheld by four girls one at each corner of the nave, who were clad in white raiment. The girls were immobile; their torches gave a pleasant smell in burning. But the light hardly touched the chancel, where several figures, all in white, save two that wore purple, were standing. They were five:

Exiles at Play

three men, two women ; and the men were more aged than the women. The two eldest might have been brothers. Both had faces deeply trenched, and the eyes almost shut by overmuch weeping ; but the long beard and locks of the one were black, over his purple cloak ; he held manacles in one hand, as if he were gaoler to his own captives ; his voice was like a passing bell ; and he was a head shorter than the second. The snow white hair of the other was well preened, and helped the lines of his face—worn perhaps as much by deep joy as by suffering—to add a grace to his august demeanour. Stooping a little, his expression was always courteous and benign. A festal garland encircled his head. From time to time he sighed, but like one whose grief has grown old along with him. The third was lame, and leant on an ivory staff. His face was haggard and tanned ; his beard grew like a furze-bush from his chin ; his mien was astringent, making one who saw it purse his lips. Yet he was the

Exiles at Play

most active of all, tapping the floor impatiently with his staff.

They were, as I afterwards learned, *Dis, Zeus, and Hephaestus*.

So old was the elder of the women, that she scarce ever moved ; yet the gracious oval of her face was almost flawless, her hair all gold. She seemed to be blind ; for her eyes never looked earthwards, and when possible she held the younger woman's sleeve. Her lips were still lax and full and red, after trembling with passionate speech—Where were her altars ? Where were the offerings of fruit and wine and flowers that once smelt so delicately to her in the twilight ? The younger woman was a copy of her done in pearl, instead of marble, and so tenderer and of more evasive beauty. Her raven hair was all of her that looked real, covering her as clouds the moon when it has waned many autumn days. From all the rest, except the elder woman, she shrank away, especially from the black beard ; but her wandering

Exiles at Play

touch she met with a shudder of joy. Standing at her left heel, haunting her when she moved, was a leopard, his face towards the light, with a look of wonder, but silent, and one eye flashing. Afterwards, when she went out, he followed, and did not return.

Soon came in a sixth person, one that would have been no more than a man, without his subtle and piercing eyes. He bore a *rhabdos*. Before the others, he broke silence, though what he said, even what he meant, I could not guess, until I heard a wave of sound begin to plunge with the words *aklaustos, ataphos*—unlamented, without a tomb. Amazed, I asked one of the torch-bearers what it meant.

“I am from Sicily,” she answered.

“I am from Sicily, and my name is Arethusa. Many a time and oft, I used to hear celebrations of my name and power. But those yonder were mightier far than I. They are the Gods; and since time now

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weighs heavily upon them, they try to lighten it and warm their frozen hearts with the remembrance of true human woe, and of

‘Sad stories chancéd in the times of old.’

The acting of old tragedies is a great joy to us. We love Euripides above all. *Alcestis* almost caused us to have hope. The agonies of *Electra* revived our own, and in the hot rush of blood that followed it, we felt that we were alive at least. Even now, they are acting the *Hecuba*. Zeus plays Agamemnon: Dis — *Odysseus*: Hephaestus — *Polymestor*: Hermes—both *Polydorus* and *Talthybius*: Demeter plays *Hecuba*: her child Persephone — *Polyxena*. . . . Hush! The ghost of *Polydorus* speaks; and *Hecuba* is at hand.”

Hermes was in fact speaking to Demeter:

“Now on the beach, now borne over the sea by ebb and flow, I lie, unlamented, without a tomb. . . . O mother! slavery instead of a queenly life is before you;

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you are fallen upon days as evil as the past was blissful; some God lays destruction in the balance against your happiness gone by."

I kept my place beside Arethusa, who chanted, with her three fellows, the words of the Chorus; and sometimes spoke to me. The aged Demeter then spoke ("She chose this part herself," whispered the nymph at my ear):

"Lead me, my maidens; lend a guiding hand to me in my old age, a slave like yourselves, though once your mistress. . . . O mighty Earth! I understand my last night's dream, the sad vision of my son secure now in Thrace, and of my sweet daughter Polyxena; it still alarms me nevertheless. . . . For my heart broke when I saw the spotted deer torn from my shelter by a bloody wolf, and slain.—This too appals me. The shade of Achilles rose above his tomb, and claimed one of the long-suffering Trojan maidens, for a sacrifice. Let it not be, I

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beseech you, Oh ! ye gods, let it not be my daughter."

Demeter sank down upon the altar, almost in a swoon, and when the news came that her daughter was chosen, she sat on, and so made known her fate to the maiden. Arethusa laid her fingers on my sleeve in her agitation, to indicate Persephone who began to speak :

"O miserable, unhappy mother ! no longer shall I be with you : I shall not relieve the pain of your captivity with my own. You will see me torn pitifully away, offered up to Hades, and sent down to the shades, luckless even in my death. I pity and weep for thee : but my own portion I can not deplore ; it is a great good fortune to die."

Had Demeter a knife, or an adder, or some other weapon ; and would she use it against Dis as he bowed and the point of his beard swept her garment obsequiously ; —I wondercd, as he came to take her daughter ; for she did much that was not in

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the book. No. She was pleading with him, putting him in mind of her early hospitality at Troy :

“As a suppliant,” she cried, “you laid your hand in mine and on my cheek. I supplicate now that you fulfil the promise then made. . . . Do not take her away and slay her. *Tōn tethnēkotōn halis*—the dead are numerous enough.”

“*Tōn tethnēkotōn halis*,” I said. “*Tōn tethnēkotōn halis*,” said Arethusa. Demeter still spoke :

“She is my consolation. She is all to me.—The mighty should not for ever be exerting their strength; nor should the prosperous think they must always prosper: for I too—but I am so no more; I was bereft of all in a day. Go. Pity me. Go and dissuade the Greeks.”

Dis turned aside and his beard quivered as he said—

“I should like my tomb to be seen covered with honours. Such honours endure.”

Exiles at Play

The Chorus lamented with pathetic emphasis—

“Alas! how wretched it is to be a slave, to suffer evil, from necessity—*tē biā nikōmenon.*”

And Demeter stole up to Persephone and whispered—

“My words are in vain. Go you therefore,—you may be more convincing—speak, like a nightingale, with all the chords of sorrow, to avoid death. Fall at his feet—he too has children.”

What Persephone replied, I could scarcely hear, so transported was I by her exquisite dignity, the sweetness of her voice, and the tragedy that shook her. Now and then I caught such a line as *Isē theoisi plēn to katthanein monon*—“Equal to the Gods except that one day I was to die”—as she evoked scenes of her early life, when she was Hector’s sister, and, with her beauty and famous lineage, worthy of princes, *turan-nōn ēxiōmena*—“but now a slave.”

I feared she would collapse, being fragile

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and tremulous as a falling wave, when she urged her mother, not to contend with the strong.

“ Surely you would not be thrown down, bruised, thrust away, and ignominiously treated, by a mere youth. Nay; do not; for it is not seemly. But, dearest mother, give me your sweet hand, and let us kiss, for never more shall I behold the sun and the sunbeams, never more.”

Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, was going, but turned back, to ask what message she might take to “Hector and Priam.”

“ Tell them,” was the answer, “ that I am the most unhappy of women.”

Demeter was sitting as once she sat by the wayside, watching for Persephone; when Hermes entered, and thus reported the maiden’s death to “the Queen of the opulent Trojans—*Poluchrusōn Phrugōn*, the wife of the fortunate Priam.

“ . . . He beekoned to the Greek youths chosen to hold the maiden. But she, seeing

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that, spoke these words: ‘Conquerors of my city, Greeks! I am willing to die, and no one shall lay hands on me. My neck shall be at your disposal. But by the Gods! leave me free and slay me, that so I may perish free; for being the daughter of a king I should be shamed if I were to die a slave.’ At this, amid cries of assentation from the soldiery, Agamemnon the king bade the youths loose her. Straightway, taking her mantle from her shoulders, she tore it down to her waist, and laid bare her lovely bosom—like a statue. Then she knelt, and more boldly than ever spoke: ‘Lo! if you would strike here, here is my breast; if here at my throat, it is ready.’ So he, between willingness and unwillingness, for pity of her, clove the channels of her breath with his sword . . . But, though dying, she was most careful to fall as was modest and fit. And the Greeks all found a service to do for her. Some cast leaves on the corpse; others built a pyre of fir trunks, and he that did

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nothing was upbraided thus : ‘ Knave ! have you nothing for her that so excelled in courage and dignity ? ’ These are my tidings to you, most blessed and yet most unhappy of mothers.”

She struggled as if to rise and seek her daughter ; but with a sigh merely sent one to bid the Greeks not to touch the body, and one to bring sea water for the last ablutions. At intervals she shrieked loudly. Her memory was working convulsively. She passed her days in dreams, and had become skilled in the interpretation thereof—*oneirophrōn* ; so she moaned—

“ O gorgeous palaces once my home ! O mansions once so happy ! O imperial, and in thy children most favoured, Priam !—*euteknōtate Priame.* How have we come to naught, losing our mettle.” Then with despair and some contempt—

“ He that lives on without accident is luckiest.”

The tenth wave of passion burst, when

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a servant brought to her the corpse of Polymestor, found on the beach. She begged, entreated, commanded Zeus to help her against the murderer, Polymestor—

“I am a slave, and feeble, I grant; but the Gods are puissant; so too is the law by which even they must live . . . Therefore, stepping back like an artist before his picture, appraise my calamities . . . Or would that by some magic Daedalian or divine, I had a voice in my arms—my hands—my feet—my hair! to fall about your knees, and besiege you with weeping and persuasion.” . . .

There were cries and blows in a far-off angle of the cloisters; the false Polymestor had lost his sight and his children by the hands of Hecuba and the Trojan women. No blood, however, spoilt those white and purple garments, or the peaceful chancel.

“The Gods,” muttered Polymestor, “shuffle things this way and that, so that we may worship them out of ignorance.”

With the play, the summer night was

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drawing to an end. With voices of clvish birds that haunt the mist, I heard the Chorus singing mournfully—“One whose grief is beyond his strength may justly set himself free from this cheap life.”

The Olympians drew closer and closer together; the torches fell, hissed, and went out; the frightened swallows alighted on the chancel windows. From all eyes tears were falling fast, but not from Hecuba’s: Demeter asked if those were poppies she could taste in the early wind. Agamemnon spoke briefly: Hecuba was to go bury the corpses of her children.

I could stay no longer, but as I went, I heard the Chorus singing for the last time—

“To the harbour, to the tents, my companions, and to the service of your masters
Necessity is God.—*sterra gar anankē.*”

The Passing of Pan

AMIDST a wood I came once upon an idiot, seated on a fallen tree, and was astonished by the classic beauty of his posture and the curls of golden hair on his head. His lips were empurpled by wild fruit. Just one bead of blood adhered to his singularly clear cheeks. The face was noble; only the mouth was discordant—rather large, and like a child's, uncontrolled. He must have been godlike as a child. Now, all but this had grown up and left the eyes wandering and the mouth lisping in a disappointing way. Fresh and bright as the fur of a beast, his long hair was full of dead leaves, with one crow's feather. His lips continually wavered with murmuring sounds. His dress I did not observe, because, I suppose, it became him

The Passing of Pan

naturally, after the manner of all the poor. As I went by he plucked and gave me a reed. He meant to give me one with a flower, and did not see his mistake, I thought. The look of expectancy, as of a brute for food, confused me, so that he laughed, showing his red tongue between his white teeth. Before leaving, I gave him a coin, which he scornfully cast away and continued his murmuring. But I had not gone far when I heard him ferreting about in the underwood where it fell. He was searching for it doubtless, while his cry, soon after, a very melodious one, was full of triumph at the find. I had, however, nearly forgotten him, the hour verging on sunset and unfavourable to the recollection of such matters, when he came up rapidly and grunting aloud, though in perfect composure like a beast out of breath, to offer me a little sheaf of fragrant reeds, all flowerless as before. He laid the weight of his hand on my shoulder and watched my lips as I spoke, imitating them with his own,

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breathing all the time lustily into my face. With what surprise I noticed the savage but not unelean flavour of his breath and the indefinable seemt of grass, herbs and bark! With a repetition of his melodious cry and a petulant stamp he went away into the wood. Afterwards I learnt that he hoarded eoin for the purchase of honey, in quest of which he was irresistible. By this food he was easily intoxicated. The half malign juices of the forest combined in the honey to overthrow the feeble brain, for Nature has odd, immoderate ways of putting into aetion her empire over men. For the rest, I was able to learn much of the idiot's way. He would often sit motionless for hours in the great wood, looking at naught, while the birds used rude, pretty intimacies towards him. Children had seen him listening for a voiee at the trunk of an oak tree on moody summer days. Once he had been detected in a four-footed pursuit of rabbits by means of a keen, and (as it were) reasoning sense of smell.

The Passing of Pan

Years afterwards I came again. But he was painfully changed. He was tending several fat horses tethered in a lane of hawthorn and waving wild hops, where the country people sauntered by to church, gaily apparelled in purple and crimson, so as to check one's breathing on that fiery day ; the neat wives bounded alongside their ungainly husbands, so light and graceful as to seem merely the clouds scattered by them in their walk. Now and then the children teased him. He recognised me at once, laying his hand tentatively on my shoulder, with the words, "I am very cold !" My teeth chattered at the touch. Being in haste, I gave him tobacco and passed onward.

Next morning I met a strolling piper at the inn, who was full of stories about his masterful pipe. In one place he had piped a city street silent, then into a dance ; in another, a fellow had split his instrument that he might find the secret—a smell of tobacco smoke apparently. "But the greatest

The Passing of Pan

fun was late last night." He had been journeying towards the inn, piping a melody he had learned in Wales, when he heard footsteps following. He piped on. The steps reeled ; it must have been a drunkard. Still he pursued, through pond and copse, until he dropped, probably in cosy grasses, out in the moonlight. "But he must have risen long ago to escape the lightning and rain."

I hurried out in alarm. It must be the idiot ! I said : Heaven knows how the night would deal with him.

At a distance I recognised my friend, as he lay in the short grass, with rooks feeding many yards clear of him. His loose mouth was evenly shut. His chin closed the lines of his face very handsomely with an emphasis unlike its wont, through the clinging wet beard. The rain had left his face white and polished, except where friendly small birds had been tapping the corners of his eyes, with intent to awaken him. A shower of petals had not yet shrivelled on his breast,

The Passing of Pan

and gave a fresh smell in the rainy air ; the two stately horses forgot to graze where they stood. In fact, he was dead, a clay pipe rigid between his teeth.

While I stood there, pondering the wonderful beauty of the corpse, which seemed now to be enjoying a perfect kind of life, perfect calm, certainly to be far more impressive than the moving frame, and to have gotten all that was once lacking, the piper came up. Perhaps his were the sensations of the hunter who has struck down some lovely harmless bird ; at least he was deeply moved. For he understood the whole event immediately, and readily showed when I asked for the instrument that he had been playing on the last night. To my surprise he drew from his pocket a simple set of reeds bound side by side together. They reminded me of the reeds I had been given so strangely in the wood long ago ; and to my inquiry how he had come by this peculiar kind, for the thing was evidently his own handiwork, he answered

The Passing of Pan

in such a manner that I was convinced that the dead man had been the giver of the reeds. At this he was greatly distressed, and parted eagerly with the pipe at my request. The body was buried in solitude. That day I hurried westward to a distant town.

The shorn wheat-fields in that mounded country were of a pale fluid yellow that mingled with the sky's blue, and was only here and there invaded by the lustrous green of an aftermath or the solid shadow of an immense elm; in it the little woods actually seemed to float. Meadowsweet like foam, and a small scabious flower always haunted by blue butterflies of the same hue, lingered by the wayside, with faint red campions and cranesbills, and yellow buttercups, hawkweeds, ragwort, and agrimony spires. On a white cottage wall flowered several great red roses. In a hedge I found one hawkweed blossom of a deep flame colour, like a dusky volcanic fire creeping out of the stones, the

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colour of the sun then about to set. One or two bramble leaves had been coloured likewise, but with green veins remaining. Placid and yet luxurious, there was something in the sunset like the old age of Lucullus. The sun itself was burning mildly and warm; the dark trees towards the west lay round it like a party of children half circling a fire, and listening to strange tales.

For in September, the early evening of the year, when darkness and light, Summer and Winter, meet without contention and combine their loveliest symbols, at sunset, a profound sense of the whole past of men and Nature is born of the sense of the year that is passing and the season that is dead, and we individuals are blended with the universe in one mellow, tranquil passion of regret. Launched by this passion upon a course of many memories, I was still far from land when I fell into deep sleep; and in my sleep I had a dream.

The Passing of Pan

The mind takes a delight in contrast as one refuge from the present ; so in my dream it was broad noon ; and because the actual season was autumn, the atmosphere of my dream was that of spring, of early spring with its poignant colours. A great forest hung round about. The might of its infinite silence and repose, indeed, never ceased to weigh upon me in my dream. I could hear sounds : they were leagues away. The trees which I could see were few : I felt that they must be thousands deep on every hand. Just where I found myself, the trees opened wide apart and enclosed a fair space of sunlight and flowery grass. At the edge of this space arborets of underwood grew, whose foliage turned to rough silver in the sun. Beyond, trees of every kind clustered together, or, rather, stood each in its own demesne, at aristocratical distance, not as in English woods. Airy, noiseless acacias were there ; stilly, religious oaks ; beeches, with boughs like human limbs, disclosed here and

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there by the light cirrus foliage, and possessed of liquid voices in their glossy, humid leaves; volatile birches; fruit trees that mounted stiffly to a certain height, where they threw off their stony character and expanded into waves of branchwork and flying spray of leaves; and beneath many, the palmy hemlock climbed the air as meaner plants climb the bushes. Not one of the trees but cast an ample shadow, like the train of a mantle falling from their shoulders and spreading outward on the sward. As the day grew, the trees appeared to retreat into the wood and leave their trains upon the grass.

Suddenly out of this great silence came the figure of a youth, walking with downward eyes, placid pace, and an attitude that expressed all the flattering thoughts of happy love and joy in life. There was much harmony in the transient grouping of his limbs, as he walked—in the raised and rounded knee, in the foot balanced on the air as on

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a step. A profusion of hair covered his temples like a tawny fleece thrown over his head in play. Coming nearer, his face told of a passion far deeper than for any maiden, though of a maiden he thought. His skin, like rose leaves, too pure to be red, too healthy to be white, had a kind of ardency or radiance, such as is seen in women, which subtly expounds a kinship between soul and mere bodily breath that men rarely show.

After he had long been in sight, a wondrous clear music arose, the music of a human voice fluting cunningly, for now and again the voice stopped and the singer let silence speak for him in the interval ; but took up the strain again, naturally as when the tones of a nightingale emerge from the quiet night, whilst the forest is listening, aware. The youth presently turned in search of this voice. In my dream I followed him.

When I saw him next, he was leaning upon a blossomy crag. The light just there

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was green under the trees like sunny ocean water. He was listening, eyes closed, "all ear."

On the other side of the crag a terrible figure stood near him, unobserved.

The figure seemed to be that of Pan, changed by the long wanderings since he fled, in advance of the general banishment of the Olympians, before the westward marches of Roman legionaries. He had often gone on hands and feet. The stones had bitten his flesh. He had drunken of his own tears. This very day the clap of axes and the volleying sound of trees falling invaded his cave. The wild bees chased him away from his customary pittance of honey-comb. Thus tormented, he was first aware of his rapid undeification. While the wild creatures avoided their suspicious co-mate more than human beings, one consolation was still effective. He retained his pipe, and could play! Moreover, sorrow had sweetened his voice—that voice to which

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the youth was listening, not by chance, it would seem, if one might judge from Pan's anxious scrutiny over the forest pathways, and the persistence of his tunes. The encounter was apparently aforethought, and welcome to Pan. He was surely looking for something from this stranger that other wayfarers could not give. For the many wayfarers, threading the forest like puppet forms, with all their fatigue and ungainliness, flattered the languid self-esteem of the embittered god by comparison ; so much so, that he amused himself by piping them far astray from their companions, playing upon their fears, until at last, horn and hoof under cover, in the guise of a mute rustic, he led them safely back, and disappeared without their thanks. But that was a slender triumph. Afterwards he often mused, reviewing the treasures of his memory, drawing fresh powers from silence, and compacting all into one brilliant song that took flight as if it must penetrate heaven, but falling splendidly, seemed to

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bury itself in earth with shrieks. He would then lament that this melody was mortal nevertheless ; he had listened to men singing like that ! And he was filled with a supreme pity—pity for the flowers, the grass, for all things that quickly pass away. To prove his old supremacy in music he must, then, compete with one of the loftiest among those mortals whom he so despised. With this in view, he seemed now to be in peaceable ambuscade ; yet with such a rival, he would loathe to do his best.

The song he was now singing made much of reminiscences of the old time, but seemed to have been turned in such a way that it should overpower the youth by the strange fascination of the forest life, enjoyed in animal liberty and with spiritual reflection. It expressed the inexpressible magic of certain hours and places ; of autumn's holy purple eve, for example ; of landscapes beheld in a kind of haze of the spirit ; of the moon-enriched flood, the moon aloft with all her

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stars. It was full of the idiom of trees and the motion of great waters.

At a pause in the song, the youth quaked to see the horned brow, the fleecy hair on the legs, and the slender bony calves ending in cloven feet, that seemed to connect the singer with the brutes, whose covering changes character in some one place at least, as at heel or muzzle, as if to remind one of the earth.

The song broke again in a fountain of clear sound from the coarse throat. One hand lay on the youth's neck, like ice ; the other hung down, grasping a seven-reeded pipe, which Pan raised to his own lips in the pauses and seemed to play—but silently. Something fond crept into the expression of that touch and the anxious little eyes fixed on the youth, as though to evoke and translate his inmost thought. Pan also was leaning on the rock, but towered above the youth. For by a brute-like artifice he was hoisted up so that only the point of one foot grated the earth.

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After he had again checked the melody, Pan offered the reeds to the youth, earnestly inviting him to play. But he refused. When the god insisted, he refused a second time, saying, “Tempt me not. The limits of my being are overthrown. If I were to play, my music would be my doom.”

To which the god, in harmonious speech, made an angry reply: “Stupid mortal! Dost thou think it a slight honour to touch this pipe? Orpheus borrowed it. The Bacchanals heard the same on Mount Cithairon. It has never changed; it will never change. The singer passes away; the song remains. Your poets have stolen it in the hush of midnight or of noon. But it is not vouchsafed to all, and lest the few betray us—lest the few betray us, we intoxicate them, we madden them, and so the world cannot believe or understand. Those who have once heard it may be sad or joyous, but their sadness is not the world’s, nor their joy; there is evermore a joy in their sorrow, a sorrow in their

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joy ; they will weep at the bridal, at the burial laugh. But none ever touched these reeds, and thou rejectest them."

"Thou hast," the youth answered fearfully, "made me hate men with thy song. How joyous I yet could be if other men were my only foes !"

"Foolish one !" cried the god. "What matters it — to lose men — if thou couldst share in the workings of the young year, be one with spring ? Deep in the forest, enthroned immortally, sits a godlike woman——." Pan had laid his hand upon the pipe that hung down in the youth's reluctant grasp, and throwing his head forward, with flashing eyes, until nothing but they and the horns could have been seen by his disciple, "Aye ! but raise not expectant eyes," he continued, as the listener was about to interrupt, "not even the gods have often seen her. We know only her thresholds. Around that throne is peace, whom thou knowest not — peace,

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where hardly the seasons bring change, where the years roll in vain, vain, at least, for harm. The very trees have voices of comfort. ‘Rest, rest, perturbed earth,’ is their cry. Her, too, thou mightest know. And consider what empire over the hearts of men thy new wisdom must give thee.”

“Power I covet not,” said the youth.

“If thou shouldst still desire what the world desires, that also thou shouldst have in plenty,” Pan went on. “Your magicians dreamed of making gold from leaves. I know, I can tell thee, the mystery of the buttercup’s gold — palpable sunshine ; mere earth become matter almost spiritual.”

“I will not have it,” murmured the youth. “Alas ! how melancholy the chill coming on of night ! I fear to-morrow’s dawn. I will not play.”

“Unwise ! but think of thy skill in love, having this lore,” insinuated Pan.

“I will not.”

“Thou couldst enjoy the liberties of earth

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and air and sea and things thou dreamst not of."

"I will not."

"Thou couldst make men wiser——."

The youth raised the pipe and began to play. First, he essayed a rural tune, from which he eireled upward in widening sweep, as of eagles climbing, through love, ambition, grief, joy, and still upward to an utteranee of the deep fears and hopes of men. One sound was a tone as of souls looking baek with earth-memories while passing the gate of the unknown. Yet the song was puissant rather in aspiration than achievement ; and when he ceased, the singer wept at the thought of what the song might have been, crying at last, "Let me try once again !" That was unnecessary. Pan had already capitulated. He took the youth by the hand, entrusting him even with the pipe. Deeper and deeper into the forest they went. In the afternoon a gauzy moon had sealed cloud after cloud of the pallid east ; now for a moment a sole

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tender star throbbed in that one placid space of milky blue amid the tumultuous cloud ; and at length, in the quiet evening, with a few planets in the blanched blue, and a transparent golden silk drawn across the west, the gloomy, tranquil cattle were noisily ruminating in a white mist over the grass. Far away, sunny cones of wheat still glimmered on the hills. Boughs made no sound as these two passed—seemed, in fact, to yield like the arms of a sleeper when we alter their place. Now and then they halted, while Pan taught the secrets of the earth, the value of this and that blossom or stem. The fingers of the god shook like a child's as he offered the plants in turn. "This," he explained at last, with a languid purple flower in his hand, "blesses the eater with eternal bliss of sleep."

They went on, both alarmed whenever night loosened a leaf or two from the forest roof, and at the lights glancing overhead in the green clerestory of the wood, when Pan

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presently missed his companion. He had noticed the youth loitering somewhat, as if anxious to learn more, and now saw him sinking to the ground. On reaching the spot, a deep sleep already claimed him ; the purple petals lay over his cheeks like blood. "Foolish one !" sighed Pan, "he sleeps, and will never wake. As for me, I will wait no longer." Tenderly he folded the youth's white fingers across his breast, wiped the crimson lips, took away the seven-reeded pipe and began to play. Slowly, earnestly, like one making a testament, while death is still out of sight but not out of thought, he brought once again to light all the famous memories of his old life, by means of that music which was of all the most renowned. He recalled how, in hiding among the cattle at Bethlehem, he had witnessed the Nativity, with its cordon of venerable bystanders. He had been a wanderer. He had followed the chase, and his huntsmen had been those spirits of the dead who make the echo ; in

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Wales it had been called “Arthur’s” hunting. The moist eyes flashed again at the thought of his gamesome tasting of the mere odours of the sacrifice, before the pious worshippers had gone and he could press his teeth into it! Now, however, the vanity of all that seemed great ; he would never repeat it. He could command adoration from none : it was time to be gone. Never again should strange ardours riot in his frame after a draught of the crimson hedgerow vintages. Mortals should now take an overflowing measure of revenge for the death of Marsyas at Apollo’s hands.

He rose, therefore, and took the seven-reeded pipe, and buried it, whence none—perhaps—might ever disinter it ; then returned, and took his place beside the youth, where he also entered an eternal sleep.

On the Evenlode

IT was the season when days are so long that we must sleep lighter than swallows, if sunset and sunrise are not to pass un-saluted. That day had been dedicated long ago to indolence. One of my festal, holy days it was, a day italicized on my calendar of saints, whose tranquil names I may not betray. On its eve, I composed my thoughts for the night with that vague sense of expectation with which I always enter upon sleep, wondering what dreams may come, and with what gifts.

When I rose it was light, though not yet day. Alone in my room, high up among the spires, the horned turrets, the acres of dark blue gleaming slate, I took a mouthful of fruit and milk, with hopes that the summer

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morning would bring me somewhere pleasantly to breakfast. Then I set out. Even now the milk must be drumming yonder in the pails! The morning was already hot, so that the chill bath of shadow underneath the lindens here and there was pleasant. At the river I took a dinghy and sculled for nearly two hours, while the fresh perfumes, refined by gale and dew—the blackbird's listless note, with a freshness as if the dew were in it—the wings rising and falling in twinkling thickets—the vinous air of June, all dealt with me as they would. Hardly a thought or memory shaped itself. Nevertheless, I was conscious of that blest lucidity, that physical well-being of the brain, "like the head of a mountain in blue air and sunshine," which is so rarely achieved except in youth. Thus in a prolongation of the mood of sleep, whose powerful touch was on me still, as I knew when I could find no answer for a questioning wayfarer, I covered several miles by one impulse, and as if nothing had inter-

On the Evenlode

vened, resumed my breakfast thoughts. For the pebbles of a shallow had been shrieking under the boat, which could go no farther. Sounds and odours suddenly invaded and startled my senses. Solitude asserted itself. The day had come : and beads of night mist were humming as they fell upon the stream from off the willows.

Precisely there I had never been before, though I knew the river well. Drawn, however, by a clamour of poultry and brass pans, I presently found myself at a farmhouse door. The river was out of sight and even of hearing, for in summer it stole through the land like a dream.

After a flutter at the unexpected arrival, the farm folk gave me a bowl of cream and a golden loaf with honey: then left me. Something puritanic in the place—or was it something in the air before the cockcrow of civilization?—endowed the meal with a holy sweetness as of a sacrament. I seemed to enjoy the merely physical life of the moment

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more purely and loftily than at other times the spiritual even. And there was still an awful purity in the air: on the smooth, stony beech-tree bark lay as if carved, the clear, subtle-shapen shadows of leaf and blossom; the lawn, level as a pond, was exquisitely damasked by daisies and buttercups.

In a sitting room, where I had leave to rest, the aged calm was startled by my entry. The perfectly still cool atmosphere had a flavour of centuries despite the open window. Amid such appropriate circumstances there hung before me the portrait of a young girl, a swan-throated, languid damsels, her raven hair concealing all of her ear save a white crescent, a semicircle of golden beads over her breast, and pervading all an expression more tragic than if Oedipus cried "Mother!" in the dark catastrophe. Was it our Lady looking for the Cross, in that great darkness over all the earth? Was it Polyxena, Hecuba's sweet and magnanimous daughter, with the dignity of a statue and the sensitive-

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ness of a flower? Was it the Magdalcn beholding angels in the dove's twilight? Was it Joan of Arc, transported by her own magic perhaps, for one hour from fatal Rouen, to see the loving faces under the shadow of Domremy Woods? Was it St Cecilia listening to music? or was it Guincvere in her father's house, lit by the strange light of things not yet above the horizon? Looking carefully I found the name. In a corner I found the initials of that name. It was therefore a piece of auto-biography.

The room was oak-furnished in a sombre but fantastic style, apparently the work of a rustic craftsman who had set his fancy free, not unsuccessfully. It looked little used, and, as such rooms in the country often are, given over to the dead (for whom one might fancy those great chairs had so long been left empty), with its photographs all but faded away, its frail old china, its recording Bible, its curious keepsakes from alien shores

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and savannahs. Through its old world savour came a thin breath of perfume from a bowl of reed colonnettes and foamy meadow-sweet. Now and then I espied, in a mirror, the mowers dreamily swaying like summer waves, or resting a moment on their scythes. I could sometimes catch faint sounds: yet they seemed but echoes. Thus the world outside was realised only as in a book. So I had opened a chance volume, and was reading:—

“Will no one tell me what she sings ?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy far-off things,
And battles long ago :
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been, and may be again !”

when a young girl came in, neither Polyxena, nor Magdalen, nor Guinevere, though it was her portrait that hung upon the wall. If her hair had not whispered in the air, I should have called her spirit or fay: so light she was, moving softly as if she flew. Though a

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noticeable face, hers was not easily to be remembered. It seemed a type rather than an individual face, the sum of many diverse souls. The ivory features were grave, yet ready to smile, with a meaning, old-fashioned sweetness, as of a century of different thoughts and passions from ours. Her large grey eyes were thinking continually. Often a long time passes ere we look into the eyes even of a lover. We could not say whether they were blue, or grey, or brown. But her eyes cried out to me instantly. Over them, almost oppressing them, the space up to the brows was full and wide, the eyebrows themselves fine, long, and curved like a hawk's outspread wings. The mouth was perhaps a little wide, because the corners, curling upwards, were unusually long: the lips delicately cut, their crimson wonderfully contrasting with her cheeks, as I have seen a creeper leaf lie in November on a film of earliest snow. The hands were small, but the fingers seemed long, being taper, arched and languid. Her

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whole expression was one of holy wistfulness, but changed ceaselessly and even contradicted itself, like a picture seen again in other days : it was full of the sorrow there is in laughter, the joy in tears. To think of her in the vulgar contacts of life was impossible. Even her simple “Good morning” could not dispel the dreams by which I was besieged : it sounded so odd, that I could not respond. So she sat down and played simple tunes on an organ. It was mere practice, earnest, sensitive, but unskilful : yet the sound mastered and swayed me inexorably. One stop there was that when touched laid open the gates of Paradise and let free its harmonies.

I laid aside my book and watched. She was too intent to observe. She was seated on a tall, straight-backed chair, and made a quaint figure, her face more serious than before, her abundant hair falling in a cascade over her shoulders, and occasionally creeping rebelliously over the silver half moon of her

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forehead which it framed, until she had to pause in order to persuade it back. Somehow within me was touched a chord that I knew I had heard—I knew not how long ago. As often at sunset the mind stirs afresh with impulses long thought ensepulchred, so it was now. Nor was the spell broken when she rose, and after shifting a few chairs, began to dance, with the same earnestness, a severe gaiety.

My brain was full of gracious phrases of salute as she left; my tongue refused; and all I said concerned the weather; to which she laughed divinely in reply.

Perhaps I should never see her again, but she haunted the memory of that resplendent day, immortalising the fragrance of the blue cottage smoke mounting in still air, the shadows lying in pools (as it were) upon the lawns, and the gauzy moon far away eastward. Laid up in the musk and lavender of my memory, she had become according to my mood Polyxena, Magdalen,

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Joan of Arc, but above all a St Cecilia, "near gilded organ pipes."

Before noon I left, with a plan of soon returning. But the next day passed, and several more. When at last I went, my flowers from that sweet place had withered. A friend accompanied me. I need say no more. The river is branched and serpentine just there, and we searched in vain. Even I sometimes think there never was such a farmhouse and St Cecilia, though in my dreams it is otherwise.

Recollections of November

IN the green country it is often hard to say, unprejudiced, what the season is; and if a revenant noted such things, he would find that many days belied the calendar. Indeed, on first going afield after a long imprisonment by illness, I have detected autumnal savours in a stagnant February day, and mistaken the bravery of October for the nuptial splendour of the spring. Seen afar off, the poplars seem to be on fire with blossoms instead of dying foliage in September. In April the young creeper leaves have a look of autumn in their bronzed luxuriance. I have known many a beaming day with “June in her eyes,” as Thomas Carew says—

“June in her eyes, in her heart January.”
with a drear wind that kills the budding

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roses. But in my suburban street every season, almost every month, is marked as it were in heavy black letter at its entrance. Nature here uses a brief language, like the hand at Belshazzar's feast, and I know that it is November by the dull, sad trampling of the hoofs and feet; by that testy wind among the chimineys (the mere *body* of the wind; its *soul* it left among the hills); by the light, as of an unsnuffed candle, of the sun, that scarcely at midday surmounts the tallest housetops; by the barren morning twilight, broken by no jolly sound of boys whistling or ballad-singing on their errands. The fire should rightly grow pale toward noon, and I detest its continual brightness, which cannot check a shudder as I read the lines on November by a Welsh poet of four or five centuries back. In his Novembers, pigs became fat and men dreamed of Christmas. The minstrels began to appear, making a second spring. The barns were full—a pleasant thought that made the

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bread taste sweet. The butcher was hard at work. The sea, he says, was joyful, and "marrowy the contents of every pot." The nights were "long to sprightly prisoners," which I take to refer to the delicious evenings the old Welsh spent, exchanging by the fireside proverbs and tales. He ends characteristically : "There are three classes that are not often contented—the sorrowful, the ill-tempered, the miserly." As if hardly these, in his day, could resist the balm and oil of festal tables, good fires, and minstrelsy ! Oh, happy days !

And yet I have joys he never dreamed of, in this mean street. How shall I say with what thoughts I spy a seagull from my window ? — spreading her great wings in flight at altitudes whence perhaps she beholds the sea—an emblem of that liberty I boast, but do not feel. Sometimes an autumn leaf of vermeil or of gold is blown into my room, and such a feeble knocking will throw open many doors of memory. At night, too, there

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is often a moon. I do not think the moon is anywhere half so wonderful as in the town. We see "the other side" of her, as a half-wise rustic once said to me. How like to some pale lady of pity she will arise, softly, as if she feared to wake us, out of yonder dismal chimneys! In summer she seems to pass from house to house, low down, a celestial watchman, blessing the doors and windows. Sometimes, more like Aphrodite than Hecate, she comes up all rosy warm. Sometimes, in November, she sits aloft like a halcyon brooding over the strange and lethal calm of London, her face expressing undecipherable things, like La Joconde. Sometimes, white and frostbit, she flies across the mighty dark blue spaces as if she were hurrying to Actæon's fate, and those hungry clouds were the hounds pursuing.

There has been but one sunset since I came hither, and in the cold succeeding light, so countercharged with darkness, great clouds

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began to troop toward the west, sombre, stealthy, noiseless ; hastening and yet steadfast, as if some fate marshalled their jetty columns—hushing all that lay beneath—all moving in one path, yet never jostling, like hooded priests. To what weird banquet, to what mysterious shrine, were they advancing—to what shrine among the firs of an unseen horizon, with the crow and the bat ? Or were they retreating, dejected guests, from some palace in the leaden east ? In the west, just above the roofs, hung the white evening star. As the cloud approached she seemed to be a maiden—Una, perhaps, encircled by a crew of satyrs. Anon she seemed to be a witch alluring them.

The moon is my closest neighbour, but there is also close at hand a superb labourer, who, if he were of stone, and not of gnarled brown flesh, might stand in a temple of faine as Cincinnatus. At times I drink a cup of tea—or something warmer—with him. Even without a cup, he sits, as it were, “with his

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feet by the fire, his stomach at the board," so genial is he, and would shake Alexander by the hand, with a greeting like the old French bacchanal's, *bon vieux drôle Anacréon*. I feel warmer in my bed as I hear him shouting good-day, in the shrewd early morning, long before dawn. His bad jokes are more laughable than the very best of good ones. Like all good men, he is an assiduous smoker; his pipe is to him a temple of Vesta, and he a goodly stoker; out of his nostrils goeth smoke, and his wife calls him Leviathan. When I remarked that I thought he had no difficulty in stopping smoking, if he liked, "No," he answered, "but the difficulty is in the liking." I would rather live a day such as he lives than have written *The Tempest*.

The only other neighbours with whom I am on calling terms are certain tall poplars, half a mile away. There the calendar is observed less slavishly, and though it be November I go to see a fine yellow sunlight

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slanting among the only half-denuded branches, hardly touched until yesterday's rainy tempest broke up for ever the sibylline summer meanings of their leaves. But they ought to be visited by night. By day they may appear insignificant among the houses that have risen around. They seem exotic, out of place — Heliades, daughters of the Sun indeed, condemned to weep amber tears — horribly slender, unprotected, naked to the world. In the night, however, they seem to have grown by magical increase. They have a solemn look in the evenfall of these sad fading days. The place is too mournful. There is usually one empty house, and the withering foliage whips the panes. I have spent many an evening inside, listening to the wind. But I could not live there; I should be bound to open the window at that piteous sound, as if to let in a storm-stricken bird, and expect to find the dryad wringing her hands in sorrow. The poplars contrive in summer to look cheerful, yet I think they

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love the autumn best. They are in love with their own decay, like old and widowed ladies that have lived on into these flat unprofitable times.

On another side, and farther still, lies a common, beautiful with gorse, though in the main a mournful place. I sometimes walk there in the morning, between eleven and noon, and meet a number of odd people, in this hour when the prosperous are at their work. They stare at me, and I at them, wondering what the shabby raiment hides. For they—I might say we—are usually ill-dressed, eccentrically-groomed, dreamy, self-conscious people, evidently with secrets. I surmise that they are such as have failed in the world for some vices of honesty, or strangeness, or carelessness of opinion. *Laudatur et alget.* One seems to be a cadet of some grand fallen house, with no insignia left save a gold snuffbox (sans snuff) and a pair of ivory hands. Another is perhaps an author, stately, uncomplaining,

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morose withal, whose nonsense did not suit the times.

“The world is all before him, where to choose
His place of rest,”

but at his garret the duns are in occupation. Another, though singularly jaded, is evidently an old beau, once, no doubt, a Fastidious Brisk, “a good property to perfume the boot of a coach,” using delicate oaths ; with soiled necktie scrupulously folded, his trousers turned up (only to display their threadbare edges and a pair of leanest shanks) ; brought to the dust by the law and some indignant plotter for his hand. One is a man of eighty, who wears a stock—probably a superannuated clerk, one who has seen his master’s failure (it may be), and refuses another place. I see him conning the law news—though he seems too blind to read — always with a knowing smile or frown. They are always solitary. They regard one another with suspicion, seem to fear lest questions be asked, and never exchange greetings. They

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give themselves airs, as hoping to draw toward them the respect they once commanded. And for the most part they are men. One lady I remember, a venerable but grim and unapproachable dame—the relict, perhaps, of a gentleman, an insolvent rake. I have heard her mutter, in a temper out of keeping with her gentility, and shake her slender staff, as if she cried, like Lear :—

“I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I would have made them skip : I am old now.”

She is a great reader, in sunny intervals, on a seat overhung, but not shaded, by hawthorn, and I love to see her poring, with tears in her eyes, over a book which I have purposely left there as she approached. In this way she has read George Herbert's *Temple*, *The Worldling's Looking Glass*, and many more. . . . It would be easy to laugh when she and three or four of these poor souls are sheltered under the same tree from the rain—never speaking, and

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looking unconcerned, but all the time nervously anxious to impress, and the beau arranging his tie.

In the evenings I could almost love these brand-new streets, so nimbly do they set the mind working to find anodynes and fantasies "to batter the walls of melancholy." My books seem to be fond of the night—poor ghosts of buried minds—and are never so apt as in the faint candlelight to be taken down and read, or perhaps merely glanced at as I turn the pages, which I think they best enjoy. The portrait of Andrea del Sarto, by his own censorious hand, hangs near, and loves the twilight. If ever, he seems now to smile. 'Tis such a light that in it fancy can without apparent falsehood weave suitable environment for all the ghostly lords and ladies. Proserpina, with the pomegranate, may now have Enna within sight. Beatrice d'Este, with passion long subdued, gazes upon the pageantry of Milan, and cares no more for Sforza and the San-

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severini—does not even hate Lucrezia and Cecilia. . . .

I recall November holidays in a tangled wood, having all the perfume and sequestered sense of virgin forest, that lay in the hollows of some undulating upland, whence, with "morning souls" alert, we used to be able to see the dawn, a rust-red smoke waving along the horizon, and presently turned to saffron; then a sky of pearl, with a faint bloom of the night blue upon it; and one by one the stars went out, so slowly that we fancied they would never disappear if we watched them vigilantly; the consumptive moon went down, having outlived her light, as the first blackbird awakened with a cornet call; the sparrows, like schoolboys, on those cold mornings, chattered and fluttered, but dared not leave the eaves; and all the cold of the windy dawn seemed to be in the starling's thin piping. Sometimes on the lawny interspacées of the wood we saw fallen leaves and fruit, gold and silver, like shed-

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dings from Hesperidian gardens, in the noon-day sun. And oh for the tang of aeorns eaten for wantonness in sunshine from which we never missed the heat! Not until nightfall did we return, and then, "happy, happy livers," laughed as our feet shivered the frost into a myriad prisms.

But to-night, as I take the self-same walk, under the flying rags of a majestic sunset, the gray and silent landscape of few trees and many houses seems a deserted camp (which I startle when I tread among the fallen leaves), or a Canaan from which the happy savage, childhood, has been banished. High up on a blank wall lingers one pure white rose. White with cold, and flickering as if the powerful wind might blow them out, a few stars shine. Far away the leafless branches of an elm grove look like old print against the sky.

And now, by the hearthside, I like best among books the faint perfumes of those old forgotten things that claim a little pity along

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with my love. I had rather the Emblems of Quarles than mightier books where there is too much of the fever and the fret of real passionate life. Odd books of devotion, of church music, the happy or peevish fancies of religious souls, please me well. I plead guilty to liking a thing because 'tis old. I believe, were I alive two hundred years hence, I should like silk hats. As George Herbert says of two words he set great store by :—

“As amber-gris leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster,
So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrancy. . . .
With these all day I do perfume my mind,
My mind e'en thrust into them both ;
That I might find
What cordials make this curious broth,
This broth of smells, that feeds and fats my
mind.”

Were it always evening I could live ever thus, and find in it a pleasing substitute for Arcadia, in which, as the bricks mellowed around me and all things took “a deep autumnal tone,” I should be as much in

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love with the life as Charles Cotton with his, and capable of a vanity like his, and I hope as pardonable. How delicious are those execrable "irregular stanzas" of his, where he seems to expect to go to heaven, because

"Good Lord ! how sweet are all things here,
How cleanly do we feed and lie.
Lord ! what good temperate hours we keep !
How quietly we sleep !
How innocent from the lewd Fashion
Is all our Business, all our Recreation !"

Perhaps, indeed, of such is the kingdom of heaven.

It has been observed that we "devour" a book, and "discuss" a turkey or chinc ; in Lilly I find a good fellow who wants to "confer" certain liquor : and with the help of these metaphors I have often dined well, though I have eaten little. I have meditated, indeed, a new cookery book for the library, or every bookman his own cook," but the tradesmen's dissuasions have prevailed. But

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out upon them ! I had hoped by this means to record those messes of old calf and dog's-ears that so reduced our bills at —. Many a time and oft have I seen a guest's lips glorified as if he tasted ambrosia, after reading Greek—Euripides, perhaps, or something solemn from Callimachus. A Welshman of the company declared that in speaking his own fine tongue he seemed to taste buttermilk and fruit at some mountain farm, a mile nearer heaven than one commonly lives. Corydon used to say he would never read Shelley save at midnight, because he could not bear to eat soon after the taste of those melodious syllables. Give me that man whose *mind* is, in a better sense than Terence intended, always among the pots and pans. And I think, on this humming midnight, I could sleep well, even supperless, after Ben Jonson's lusty lines “Inviting a Friend to Supper” :—

“To-night, grave sir, both my poor house and I
Do equally desire your company ;

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Not that we think us worthy such a guest,
But that your worth will dignify our feast,
With those that come ; whose grace may make that
seem

Something, which else could hope for no esteem.
It is the fair acceptance, sir, creates
The entertainment perfect, not the cates.
Yet shall you have, to rectify your palate,
An olive, capers, or some better salad
Ushering the mutton . . .

“ I’ll tell you of more, and lie, so you will come,
Of partridge, pheasant, woodcock, of which some
May yet be there ; and godwit, if we can ;
Knat, rail, and ruff, too. Howsoe’er, my man
Shall read a piece of Virgil, Tacitus,
Livy, or of some better book to us,
Of which we’ll speak our minds, amidst our meat.

“ Nor shall our cups make any guilty men ;
But at our parting, we will be, as when
We innocently met. No simple word
That shall be uttered at our mirthful board,
Shall make us sad next morning ; or affright
The liberty that we’ll enjoy to-night.”

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How pleasant smelt the wood smoke as it rose in a blue column between the pines ! Against the sky its ethereal woof was invisible. For a space the pines, with their wintry noise that never ceases, alternating with grizzled oak trees, lined the roadside. A sudden freshness told us where they ended ; then the trees grew farther apart, and ash, beech and elm made a great silence that was startling, after the companionable murmur of the firs. Their colour was that green which, though never old, is never quite youthful. Every other tree was black for miles, discovering those deep-hued cantles of the sky, betwixt the branchwork, that are the peculiar wonder of leafless woods. On every side rose

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and fell leagues of untenanted lawn, of a cold green, that in the light of a February dawn, so clear, so absolutely clear, looked as the savannahs of Eden must have looked on the first day of the world. There were gardens, ingeniously remarked Sir Thomas Browne, before there were men; and these pastoral solitudes seemed not to have been "made with hands." For aught I knew, no one was abroad in all the world. It was hard to believe otherwise; for there was an extraordinary, virginal purity in the notes of a thrush that sang (as it sang every day) on its particular bough of elm, in the sheen of the first celandines, and in the herbage that waved, encased in dew. Everything was the same as of old—yet not the same. I seemed to be on the eve of a revelation. I could have wept that my senses were not chastened to celestial keenness, to understand the pipits singing as they flew. In a short time the common look of things returned. The rooks began to pass overhead, and some

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alighted, their feathers changing to silver as they turned in the sun. A gate was banged far off. The cock crew, and the sound stirred the sleeping air farther and farther round, like a stone falling into a pool. I felt that it was cold. Beside a distant pool the ash trees had still some magic. Some "potent spirit" was surely hidden among their boughs ; as we approached them, indeed, we expected to discover their secret. But on passing underneath all had fled except a whimpering of the breeze, and instead of something "mystic, wonderful," nothing appeared save a robin singing alone—

"And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

The afternoon of that same day was in another style. A railway journey had effected just such an inconsequent change as comes in dreams. The air was full of that oppressive silence into which changes the unintelligible clamour of towns. Looking scarce farther or higher than the cathedral tower, the sun

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vainly competed with the clock face gleaming beside the Thames. Over the grey water rose and fell continually the grey wings of gulls ; others screamed with a melancholy “dying fall” in the grey spaces of heaven, soaring doubtless into silence beyond the mist, in the enjoyment of we knew not what amenities of light and warmth.

“Solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.”

Grey roofs, grey ships ; indeed, only one immobile ruddy sail of a barge, drifting up, coloured the Quakerish raiment of the day. By dipping my pen into the grey Thames ripple I am fain to make grey the reader’s mind as it did mine. But words are frail ; even the word “grey,” which of all chromatic epithets is most charged with mental and sentimental meaning, has boundaries. The grey changed somewhat ; it was night. If the day had seemed a dying thing, the night seemed dead, and not a funeral note came through the mist. So a week passed, and,

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defrauded thus of a sweet tract of life (such as that February dawn had promised), I watched the clockwork movements of the grey-minded men and women pacing the streets. I met hundreds of people in the streets that might have taken rôles in the Inferno. And in a more personal and horrible sense than Goethe meant, I felt that here on earth we have veritably to enact hell, as I looked down from a great bridge. A steamer—the ghost of a steamer—passed under. I could hear a voice, perhaps two; I could see a form—the shadow of a form—flit past upon the deck.

“Is that a Death? and are there two?”

But the ship slid softly away under her pyramid of almost motionless smoke. A barge soon afterwards followed: it seemed a league long, and at the stern—ridiculously small—was what must have been the figure of a man straining at an immense oar, and black, thrice black, in that horrid twilight.

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He passed : I was powerless to speak, though I felt he was drifting on to hell—calmly as at the smoothly swirling outmost circle of a whirlpool. Close to the bridge where I stood were many ships aground, with many men at work, climbing masts, walking dreadfully on rippling planks to land, going and coming, coming and going. Only those nearest were thus visible. Those farther off seemed more grisly or more fantastic in their employments. The sun, lying as it were in blood-red pools upon the mud left by the ebb, unnaturally exaggerated men and trades. There was a sense of continuous, inexorable motion. Surely I could see wheels revolving? Almost as surely did I see Ixions bound thereon. I saw yokefellows to Pirithous, Salmoneus, and Tityus. Some of the forms were certainly not human, and the scene, under the doubtful conflict of fierce light with shadow and mist seemed

“a palace bright
Bastioned with pyramids of glowing gold ;

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And all its curtains of Aurorean clouds
Flushed angerly : while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by gods or wondering men,
Darkened the place ; and neighing steeds were
 heard,
Not heard before by gods or wondering men."

It was almost more horrible still that nothing groaned. The air was left silent with a sense that over all watched some omnipotent assessor who grimly shook the urn. I had no sleepy, honeyed passport for the Cerberus thereof. But I would not for a great price have ventured there, though close behind rang the noise of hoofs, slightly drowned by the hiss of mud. I felt as some lonely spectator of a tragedy in a great theatre,

"*In vacuo tristis sessor plausorque theatro.*"

The sun was burning like newly minted copper.

From London, I remember, we travelled to the county of —, in South Wales. February was making the best of his short life, and leaving March a great deal to undo. "Is

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there no religion for the temperate and frigid zones ? ” asks Thoreau, at the end of his “Winter Walk.” Round the great open Welsh hearths we found a sufficient creed in the sweet paganism of a fire worship which in that country insists on a blaze in June ; preferring it, since for mental and sentimental warmth the sun is some few millions of miles too distant. Spending such an evening by the fireside, it was pleasant to note a culinary genius which experiments evoked. I know nothing that makes the conversation go more “trippingly on the tongue” than the discussion of such dainties as hands modestly declared inexperienced will compose out of scant elements.

“Matter ! with six eggs and a strike of rye meal
I had kept the town till Doomsday, perhaps
longer ; ”

and with less than old Furnace, the cook in Massinger’s play, we did succeed in keeping melancholy from the door. Through the

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window we saw a grey beggar feeding a party of sparrows with his crumbs—a fine economy, charity reduced to its lowest terms. Not, however, that it was a hard season. But the willows were in bud, and for that very reason—there were so many tender things to look cold—the sting was more keen. All day were seen rapid clouds tumbling past a white horizon, firmly stamped with the outlines of trees; the willow undulating all together, like a living wave of foliage and limber boughs; the river flowing out of silver into blue shadow, and again into silver where the sky bent as if to touch it; leaf and flower of celandine gleaming under the briars; whilst the air was vibrant though windless—stirred like water in a full vessel when more is still poured in. It was the most perfect of days. The air had all the sparkling purity of winter. It had, too, something of the mettle and gusto of the spring. The scent of young grass, uncontested by any flower or fruit, was sharp

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though faint, and thus the air was touched with a summer perfume. Now and then a blackbird fluted a stave or two. But the silence was mysteriously great, because the incalculably subtle sound of the ocean was ever there, solemnizing, deepening, and as it were charging with "large utterance" the silence it could not break. The whole countryside of grassy level and rolling copse was like a shell put to the ear. For the shore was never still. A little way out the fisher boats might be curtseying on the tranquil tide; but reaching the shore, the same tide came upon fantastic rocks that were an organ out of which it contrived an awful music. Under the beams of the rocking moon, those tall, cadaverous crags rose up like stripped reapers, gigantic and morose, reaping and amassing the dolorous harvest of wrecks, waist-deep in a surge whose waves seemed not to flow and change, but to turn, turn ceaselessly in the contracted corridors among the rocks, like wheels revolving, and bespattered by the

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foam that huddled, yellow, coagulate, quaking, in the crevices.

Soon afterward snow fell, apparently making the air meeter for its freight of scent from the first violets, which certainly smelt sweeter than they had ever done before. The strong bells were choked by snow, and tinkled very timidly in the church. Lightly clothed by the same fall, the pillared tower of white stone looked wonderfully radiant in the moonlight, as if fresh from the footsteps of angels or garnished for a day of extraordinary celebration. Then, too, was the bell note sweetest, though always unequalled in pure aerial quality, because

“We cannot see, but feel that it is there,”

hid as it is in some dim belfry or mossy turret from which one never expects so fine a voice.

As we passed upward to the hills, one day, the snow was fading in the sun, and the laurels rose suddenly up as they shook it off

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in shower after shower. On one hand the ghost of a distant mountain hung lighter than cloud. For a moment another snow shower fell, but settled only on the scattered green of the arable fields: so on that hand lay miles of dark land under a veil of delicatest cirrus. Two miles ahead, on the boldest height of all, was the ruin—the mere dust and ashes—of a castle, pale, continually lost among clouds of which it seemed a part, and as unreal as if it were still in “the region of stories,” and we were reading of it in the monkish chronicle.

The path followed one side of a steep wooded valley, and at the bottom a mountain river ran fast over great stones, its noise muffled by the trees, as if it talked in its beard. For almost a mile we could hear the sounding smoke of a white cataract which gave the river its speed. The great marsh marigolds had come. Fragments of an ancient wall stood here and there among the trees: the stones were blessed with mosses, in whose miniature forests an autumnal red prevailed,

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which, however, loaded with dew, turned to perfect silver in the sun.

Reaching the castle on the hill, I came from those creatures of the seasons and the hours as if straight upon time itself. The noble masonry preserved the curves of several pointed arches; some of the apartments might still have sheltered a stout physique from the pleasantries of wind and rain; but the building had unmistakably been overtaken by eternity. It had for centuries ceased to live. Now death itself was dead within these stones; it was resolved into its elements again. Approaching the castled crag, it was hard to say where crag ended and castle began. Examining the masonry, it was indistinguishable from the rock on which it lay. In summer the wild thyme and the harebell did their best to conceal what was written in terse hieroglyphics on the stones. But winter had undone these sweet deceits. By degrees a feeling of horror grew and became less vague. I accidentally loosened a stone, which

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fell noisily down the almost perpendicular cliff for two hundred feet to the fields below, and by no hard feat of the fancy I felt myself as insignificant as that stone ; I too was cast over the abyss. One of the walls rose almost in line with this sheer cliff, and I could not help picturing the dreadful trade when that side was building. Many a slave must have dropped from the rising wall on to the plain. It is said that Roman mortar was made so durable by addition of human blood. That may be ; here, it is certain, every stone owes its place to human blood. I passed several gaps for the crossbowmen, and looked out : nothing nearer than three hundred feet was visible, and that was below. I followed all the grisly windings of the dripping dungeon, and had scarce the heart to trace back my footsteps into the light. How well these builders expressed themselves ! How perfect is their style, the shadow of their personality ! There is no mistaking the superb brutality of their nature. So forcibly was this still

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expressed that unwillingly I conjured up their subtlest cruelties to my mind. I too, like the prisoner five hundred years ago, was thrust through that deep and narrow window on to the plain below!

I cannot imagine any beings more unlike the builders and owners of this castle than the legendary mediæval knights. What has a Kehydius or a Perceval to do with shrieks which I still could hear amidst this ruin? Yet tradition connected these walls with Urien.

Then we passed into the little chapel of the castle, still a holy place, where a furze bush flowered, and the ancient turf lay innocent of the footprints even of wind. It was a refuge of eternal peace—peace entailed and handed down through centuries of pleasant and melodious calm, to the chanting of holy men. Our entering footsteps and voices sounded most unreal. We were the ghosts. Antiquity—the echo, the shadow—was the one thing real. In a short time the

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ruins were lit by that weird light “sent from beyond the skies,” just after sunset, when far-off things are dim, but near things are strangely near. Those who walked there took deep draughts of eternity,

“*Securos latices et longa oblivia potant.*”

A lark was scaling the clouds as day fell, and sang, though driven madly backward by the wind. In their motion past the sun the monstrous clouds were transmuted into fiery vapours, “such stuff as dreams are made on,” light and graceful as Aphrodite rising from the sea. And already a valley here and there was full of night.

Day was almost gone, when again, just as at a certain part of dawn, for a short time spring seemed to be coming down the wind into the land, undeniably the genius of spring, though invisible, inaudible. This promise was nearer a perfume than anything else—as of remote blossom, driven hither across leagues of drenching Atlantic air, making the nostrils

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dilate with half-diffident expectation and surprise. A bat flew round the keep, and his snipping sound could be heard overhead. Hesperus came out, and burned longer than it had done before that year, so that in its tender light the land seemed in that brief half hour to advance a long way toward the season of catkins, through which the first voices from the south—chiff-chaff and wood wren—would presently creep and stir vapours of golden pollen, while in the clear noon there would be no shadow save the fly's on the great buttercup.

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ON that October day, nothing was visible at first save yellow flowers, and sometimes a bee's quiet shadow crossing the petals: a sombre river, noiselessly sauntering seaward, dropped with a murmur, far away among leaves, into a pool. That sound alone made tremble the glassy dome of silence that extended miles and miles. All things were lightly powdered with gold, by a lustre that seemed to have been sifted through gauze. The hazy sky, striving to be blue, was reflected as purple in the waters. There, too, sunken and motionless, lay amber willow leaves; some floated down. Between the sailing leaves, against the false sky, hung the willow shadows,—shadows of willows overhead, with waving foliage, like the train of

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a bird of paradise. One standing on a bridge was seized by an Hylean shock, and wondered as he saw his face, death-pale, among the ghostly leaves below. Everywhere, the languid perfumes of corruption. Brown leaves laid their fingers on the cheek as they fell; and here and there the hoary reverse of a willow leaf gleamed at the crannied foot of the trees.

One lonely poplar, in a space of resplendent lawn, was shedding its leaves as if it scattered largess among a crowd. Nothing that it gave it lost; for each leaf lay sparkling upon the turf, casting a splendour upwards. A maiden unwreathing her bridal garlands would cast them off with a grace as pensive as when the poplar shed its leaf.

We could not walk as slowly as the river flowed; yet that seemed the true pace to move in life, and so reach the great gray sea. Hand in hand with the river wound the path, and that way lay our journey.

In one place slender coils of honeysuckle

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tried to veil the naked cottage stone, or in another the subtle handiwork of centuries had covered the walls with lichen. And it was in the years when Nature said

“Incipient magni procedere menses,”

when a day meant twenty miles of sunlit forest, field, and water,

“Oh! moments as big as years,”

years of sane pleasure, glorified in later reveries of remembrance. . . . Near a reedy, cooty backwater of that river ended our walk.

The day had been an august and pompous festival. On that day, burning like an angry flame until noon, and afterwards sinking peacefully into the soundless deeps of vesperal tranquillity as the light grew old, life seemed in retrospect like the well-told story of a rounded, melodious existence, such as one could wish for one's self. How mild, dimly golden, the comfortable

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dawn! Then the canvas of a boat creeping like a spider down the glassy river pouted feebly. The slumberous afternoon sent the willow shadows to sleep and the aspens to feverish repose, in a landscape without horizon. Evening chilled the fiery cloud, and a gray and level barrier, like the jetsam of a vast upheaval, but still and silent, lay alone across the west. Thereafter a light wind knitted the willow branches against a silver sky with a crescent moon. Against that sky, also, we could not but scan the fixed grasses bowing on the wall top. For a little while, troubled tenderly by autumnal maladies of soul, it was sweet and suitable to follow the path towards our place of rest,—a gray, immemorial house with innumerable windows.

The house, in that wizard light “sent from beyond the sky,”—for the moon cast no beams through her prison of oak forest,—seemed to be one not made with hands. Was it empty? The shutters of the plain,

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square windows remained unwhitened, flapped ajar. Up to the door ran a yellow path, levelled by moss, where a blackbird left a worm half swallowed, as he watched our coming. A large red rose, divided and spilt by birds, petal by petal, lay as beautiful as blood, upon the ground. This path and another carved the lawn into three triangles ; and in each an elm rose up, laying forth auburn foliage against the house in November even.

The leaves that had dropped earlier lay, crisp and curled, in little ripples upon the grass. There is a perfect moment for coming upon autumn leaves, as for gathering fruit. The full, flawless colour, the false, hectic well-being of decay, and the elasticity, are attained at the same time in certain favoured leaves ; and dying is but a refinement of life.

In one corner of the garden stood a yew tree and its shadow ; and the shadow was more real than the tree,—the shadow inlaid in the sparkling verdure like ebony. In

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the branches the wind made a low note of incantation, especially if a weird moon of blood hung giddily over it in tossing cloud. To noonday the ebony shadow was as lightning to night. Towards this tree the many front windows guided the sight; and beyond, a deep valley was brimmed with haze that just exposed the tree tops to the play of the sunset's last random fires. To the left, the stubborn leaves of an oak wood soberly burned like rust, among accumulated shadow. To the right, the woods on a higher slope here and there crept out of the haze, like cloud, and received a glory, so that the hill was by this touch of the heavens exaggerated. And still the sound of waters falling among trees. Quite another scene was discovered by an ivy-hidden oriel, lit by ancient light, immortal light travelling freely from the sunset, and from the unearthly splendour that succeeds. There the leaves were golden for half a year upon the untempestuous oaks in that sunken land. The tranquillity,

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the fairness, the unseasonable hues, were melancholy: that is to say, joy was here under strange skies ; sadness was fading into joy, joy into sadness, especially when we looked upon this gold, and heard the dark sayings of the wind in far-off woods, while these were still. Many a time and oft was the forest to be seen, when the chillest rain descended, fine and hissing,—seen standing like enchanted towers, amidst it all, untouched and aloof, as in a picture. But when the sun had just disappeared red-hot in the warm, gray, still eventide, and left in the west a fiery tissue of wasting cloud, when the gold of the leaves had an April freshness, in a walk through the sedate old elms there was “a fallacy of high content.”

Several roses nodded against the gray brick, as if all that olden austerity was expounded by the white blossoms that emerged from it, like water magically struck from the rock of the wilderness. In the twilight

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silence the rose petals descended. So tender was the air, they lay perfect on the grass, and caught the moonlight.

In ways such as these the mansion spoke. For the house had a characteristic personality. Strangely out of keeping with the trees, it grew incorporate with them, by night. Behold it, as oft we did, early in the morning, when a fiery day was being born in frost, and neither wing nor foot was abroad, and it was clothed still in something of midnight; then its shadows were homes of awful thoughts; you surmised who dwelt therein. Long after the sun was gay, the house was sombre, unresponsive to the sky, with a Satanic gloom.

The forest and meadow flowers were rooted airily in the old walls. The wildest and delicatest birds had alighted on the trees.

Things inside the house were contrasted with the lugubrious wall as with things without. The hangings indeed were sad, with a design of pomegranates; but the

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elaborate silver candelabra dealt wonderfully with every thread of light entering contraband. One braided silver candlestick threw white flame into the polished oaken furniture, and thence by rapid transit to the mirror. An opening door would light the apartment as lightning. Under the lights at night the shadowy concaves of the candelabra caught streaked reflections from the whorls of silver below. The Holy Grail might have been floating into the room when a white linen cloth was unfolded, dazzling the eyes.

In the upper rooms, the beds (and especially that one which owned the falcon's eye of an oriel)—the beds, with their rounded balmy pillows, and unfathomable eider down that cost much curious architecture to shape into a trap for weary limbs, were famous. All the opiate influence of the forest was there. Perhaps the pillow was daily filled with blossoms that whisper softliest of sleep. There were perfumes in the room quite inexplicable. Perhaps they had outlived the

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flowers that bore them ages back, flowers now passed away from the woods. The walls were faded blue ; the bed canopy a combination of three gold and scarlet flags crossed by a device in scarlet and gold, “ Blessed is he that sleepeth well, but he that sleeps here is twice blessed.”

The whole room was like an apse, with altar, and purp, hieratic ornament. To sleep there was a sacramental thing. Such dreams we had.

Against that window were flowers whose odour the breeze carried to our nostrils when it puffed at dawn. If excuses could be found, it was pleasant to be early abed in summer, for the sake of that melancholy western prospect, when the songs of the lark and the nightingale arose together. We fell suddenly asleep with a faint rush of the scent of juniper in the room, and the light still fingering the eyelashes. Or, if we closed the window, in that chamber—

“ That chamber deaf of noise and blind of sight,”

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we could hear our own thoughts. Moreover, there was a graceful usage of making music while the owl hooted vespers; for a bed without music is a sty, the host used to say,—as the philosopher called a table without it a manger.

Alongside the bed, and within reach of the laziest hand, ran two shelves of books. One shelf held an old *Montaigne*; the *Lyrical Ballads*; the *Morte Darthur*; *The Compleat Angler*; Lord Edward Herbert's *Autobiography*; George Herbert's *Temple*; Browne's *Urn Burial*; Cowper's *Letters*. The other shelf was filled by copies, in a fine feminine hand and charmingly misspelt, of the long-dead hostess's favourites, all bound according to her fancy by herself: Keat's *Odes*; *Twelfth Night*; *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*; the *Twenty-first Chapter of St. John* and the *Twenty-third Psalm*; Virgil's *Eclogues*; Shelley's *Adonais*; part ii. section ii. member 4, of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, called “Exercise Rectified of Body and Mind”;

An Autumn House

Lord Clarendon's Eulogy of Falkland, in the *History of the Great Rebellion*; a great part of *The Opium Eater*, and Walter Pater's *Child in the House* and *Leonardo da Vinci*, added by a younger but almost equally beautiful hand.

What healing slumbers had here been slept, what ravelled sleaves of care knit up! Ancient room that had learned peacefulness in centuries, to them whose hunger bread made of wheat doth not assuage, to those that are weary beyond the help of crutches, you, ancient room in that gray immemorial house, held sweet food and refuge. To the bereaved one, sleeping here, you redeemed the step that is soundless for ever, the eyes that are among the moles, the accents that no subtlest hearing shall ever hear again;— You, ancient bed, full of the magic mightier than “powerfullest lithomancy,” had blessings greater than St Hilary’s bed, on which distracted men were laid, with prayer and ceremonial, and in the morning rose restored.

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With you, perhaps, was Sleep herself: Sleep that sits, more august than Solomon or Minos, in a court of ultimate appeal, whither move the footsteps of those who have mourned for justice at human courts, and mourned in vain: Sleep, by whose equity divine the bruised and dungeoned innocent roams again emparadised in the fields of home, under the smiles of familiar skies: Sleep, whose mercy is not bounded, but

“droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven,”

even upon the beasts. Sleep soothes the hand of poverty with gold, and pleases with the ache of long-stolen coronets the brows of fallen kings. Had Tantalus dropped his eyelids, sleep had ministered to his lips. The firman of sleep goes forth: the peasant is enthroned, and accomplished in the superb appurtenances of empire; the monarch finds himself among the placid fireside blisses of light at eventide; and

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those in cities pent sleep beguiles with the low summons,

“ *Ad claras Asiæ volemus urbes.* ”

Because sleep clothes the feet of sorrow with leaden sandals and fastens eagles' wings upon the heels of joy, I wonder that some ask at nightfall what the morrow shall see concluded : I would rather ask what sleep shall bring forth, and whither I shall travel in my dreams. It seems indeed to me that to sleep is owed a portion of the deliberation given to death. If life is an apprenticeship to death, waking may be an education for sleep. We are not thoughtful enough about sleep ; yet it is more than half of that great portion of life spent really in solitude. “ *Nous sommes tous dans le desert ! Personne ne comprend personne.* ” In the desert what then shall we do ? We truly ought to enter upon sleep as into a strange, fair chapel. Fragrant and melodious antechamber of the unseen, sleep is a novitiate

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for the beyond. Nevertheless, it is likely that those who compose themselves carefully for sleep are few as those who die holily; and most are ignorant of an art of sleeping (as of dying). The surmises, the ticking of the heart, of an anxious child,—the awful expectation of Columbus spying the fringes of a world,—such are my emotions, as I go to rest. I know not whether before the morrow I shall not pass by the stars of heaven and behold the “pale chambers of the west,” returning before dawn. To many something like Jacob’s dream often happens. The angels rising are the souls of the dreamers dignified by the insignia of sleep. Without vanity, I think in my boyhood, in my sleep, I was often in heaven. Since then, I have gone dreaming by another path, and heard the sighs and chatterings of the underworld; have gone from my pleasant bed to a fearful neighbourhood, like the fifth Emperor Henry, who, for penance, when lights were out, the watch fast asleep, walked abroad barefoot,

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leaving his imperial habiliments, leaving Matilda the Empress. And when the world is too much with me, when the past is a reproach harrying me with dreadful faces, the present a fierce mockery, the future an open grave, it is sweet to sleep. I have closed a well-loved book, ere the candle began to fail, that I might sleep, and let the soul take her pleasure in the deeps of eternity. It may be that the light of morning is ever cold, when it breaks in upon my sleep and disarrays the palaces of my dreams.

“Each matin bell . . .
“Knells us back to a world of death.”

The earth then seems but the fragments of my dream, that was so high.

Rain

THE prejudice of poets against water has perhaps kept rain out of fashion in literature. It is true that rain is among the subtle, anonymous *dramatis personæ* of Lear, and that Milton wove into the harmonies of melancholy "the minute-drops from off the eaves." Swift's famous "Shower" knocks somewhat grossly at the door. "There never was such a shower since Danac's" ran contemporary compliment. There is, too, an allusion to rain in "Childe Harold," as a pianissimo accompaniment to storms. But it is characteristic of modern poetry, as a criticism of life by livers, that it has left the praise of rain to hop farmers and of mud to shoe-blacks. If literature were faithful to life, there would have been a chorus of bene-

Rain

dictions after the rain that whispered on the hansom window-panes and sent the grumbling Thames to sleep with soft hands, as we drove from the play on a Midsummer night ; the French Academy would have elected at least one member for his rendering of the meaning of sleet, during a gray and purple sunset over the coast of Brittany. Even at the fireside I am washed by rain until I seem to glimmer and rejoice like the white headstones on the hill !

It is falling now as I sit with paper-spoiling intention, and the sound brings back the rain that used to come from heaven on summer mornings at Oxford, while invisible cattle were lowing and doves cooing, and a distant bell was tolled : brings back the rain in a city street by night, that softened the sky to a deep blue that was the very hue of mercy thrown over the awful darkness ; and—gaily, daintily—the drops that came and went (like stars in a restless sky) on the fir-tree foliage as we came to the trout river, in sudden sunlight.

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Now it is near sunset. The blackbirds are singing lazily in the gardens. The traffic has ceased as if the silence had cried : "No thoroughfare." A Cireean lady is playing Grieg. She could turn us into swine; that her quiet smile proclaims : she does for the time change into gods some of those who are sitting in the great blue apartment, half shadowed, as the expression fluctuates, tender, minatory, tumultuous, hypnotic, vast. Still the rain is falling, and the horse-chestnuts in the street expand, their leaves shine. Their size and beauty are as things newly acquired. Two especially that rise between distant groups of houses fill the whole space of sky—touch the stars ; in a few minutes, the constellations hang in their branches and swing as the trees are shaken. The rain has gone to their very hearts. They sigh tremulously as if the drops moved them with a tranquil joy. I could wish I were a horse-chestnut now. . . . In winter I have seen them made much of by the heavens, and, against the rainy blue, so

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vast as to touch the roof of the temple, like the Zeus of Pheidias, particularly when all day the shower has descended pensively and without wind. Then songs were hushed ; the pools rocked only with smooth leaden waves. Before evening the rain had worked its spell. Thrushes' songs filled the hawthorns among the gorse. The wan grass was beautiful ; but for a time the young blades were dominant, deep green with the depth of night, yet fresh with the freshness of day ; black, dripping trees overhung the grass, and both had a colour like that of hues and forms seen through water. All things smiled faintly so that I seemed to touch the pericardium of eternity. The slight melancholy and the great solemnity of the rain that had passed away entered the song of the robin.

Few pictures deal nobly with rain and mud. Yet in a great city what elvish effects they prepare ! Coruscating, sadly but brilliantly, the mud gravely relieves the white faces and gaudy raiment that pass by night, and adds

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to the dreaminess of a scene, in which the pageant of life is like a strange flora to the eye. Of all the mud I have known, the most beautiful is that which is often to be seen on the bank of Thames below Waterloo bridge, lying like a crude monster, while the sunset is rosy and green and purple on its flanks, and two swans float and barges heave at rest ; or while at dawn the city is all its own, a quiet grey city that has vanished when the mud has sunk below the tide.

One shower I remember that wrought magic in a London garden. A kind of judicious neglect by the owner had made the garden a kindly party to any unusual trick of the elements. On the lawn was a sundial that made Time an alluring toy. At the bottom of the garden, beyond the lawn, was an enclosed space of warm rank grasses, and, rising over them a vapour of cow-parsley flowers. A white steam from the soil faintly misted the grass to the level of the tallest buttercups. Rain was falling, and the grasses

Rain

and overhanging elm trees seemed to be suffering for their quietness and loneliness, to be longing for something, as perhaps Eden also dropped "some natural tears" when left a void. A hot, not quite soothing, perfume crept over the lawn. All night I was haunted by those elms which appeared as grey women in cloaks of that strange mist. For the time, that garden was the loneliest place on earth, and I loved and feared its loneliness.

Of rain seen from indoors, falling on a broad rich land of grass and trees, or seen (from heavenly altitudes) falling on the gray and blue slates of a town I dare not speak. But I have known the rain, hissing on the lawn, complete the luxury of tea at Oxford in November, when the heart is fresh from walking. There is a generous fire; seven league slippers on the feet; hot buttered brown toast, and, as evening changes from gray to gray in quiet crescendo, still the rain.

Rain

In this London garden there was one day which I may not omit, for the rain that buried it said many things which I have copied.

The shadow of the lime trees lay soft upon the grass, wonderfully soft because of the shy early sunlight. A bird sang such blithe notes as wakened the soul, disrobing it of the dishonours and disgusts of ages, restoring it to Paradise. From a corner of the garden I could see, over many steeples and chimneys, the side of a great wave of land, fledged with a few white cloudlets; and as yet I could not say whether these were of snow or blackthorn flowers. Fainter still, among distant trees, I saw a doubtful glimmer which might be the forward sweeping hem of vernal splendour. In such moments of doubt I have found the calendar's positive announcement of Spring a solace. A mist muffled the angles of the landscape, a mist where the whole force of spring might lie in ambush. The sun had burnt for an hour

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like the fire of a thrifty candle. Presently it flushed (it almost crackled like a faggot) with a good-humoured lustihead. Then I knew that in the grass the dewy charities of the south winds were beginning to tell, and that the haze had fostered that slumbrous warmth in which chaffinches love to sing. Through the gray air at first the sky was invisible, save a misted blue pane here and there appearing, and vanishing, and engrailed by the grey cloud. Some windows northward glowed. Something undefinable that was Spring's and Dawn's richly mounted everything; it entered the new stone church and gave it centuries backward and forward of glory and repose. Even the shadows on a dusty road were mysterious as shadow on deep water, and had an azure unknown before. And still the blackbirds sang :—

“ High trolollie lollie loe
High trolollie lee.
Tho' others think they have as much
Yet he that says so lies.

Rain

“Then come away,
Turn country man with me.”

A wind just lifted the coltsfoot down. Such a wind it was as brings to corners where the willow-wrens never wander a sound like the song of willow-wrens and all that their bland southern voices mean among English trees. It comes in March from between the South and the East, and passes into the cold and odourless meadows, with the odour of all the flowers of the orient and the sweetness of the sea.

My path lay between rows of houses that were hidden by almond flowers among black boughs. If I paused—and the wind dropped—I could just detect the reluctant savour of struggling green life. Then the “lane” became the bordering road of a common. Here the sun was the genius of a company of haggard poplars in whose branches it seemed to hang, and the paths are haunted by ghosts of divers faces,—O Memory!

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“Tuis hic omnia plena
Muneribus.”

One of these ghosts—the rain was beginning to hiss in the trees and patter on the dead leaves below—was of an old man who had played Edmund in his youth. Beaten by a slow mortal disease in his prime, he had lived happily in the midst of friends who never abated the services which his gracious feebleness exacted and made appear a duty. He who should have died first survived them all. His mind nodded and slept, leaving a childishness that was not happy. All the pleasant valetudinarian space disappeared from his memory; the tumultuous early days returned, and at intervals he strayed amidst the pageant in which the figures of Lear and Richard the Second towered with minatory pomp. For his part had ever been traitorous and base. The evil acted “in his days of nature” haunted him fearfully. In a great voice (so that he used to say: “I fear my mother hears

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me") he would repeat the speech of Lear: "Howl, howl, howl, howl, Oh! ye are men of stones," as often he had heard it when, as Edmund, he was borne off before the end: he seemed to whimper behind the stage, crying bitterly to be admitted to die before the King. Luckily, before his death all became dark. It was with surprise that I heard he was dead. For years he seemed not to have lived. . . .

Now the road went near several great houses, of a kind which rain makes eloquent. And the rain was falling then with a sound like the silence of a multitude. They were not the old, beautiful houses of London, but such as were built not more than sixty years ago for someone grown suddenly rich. The old houses can always chatter of what has fallen from them by indiscreet neglect or foolish care, and all must regret the blotting of the little unnecessary trifles that were part of their nobility, like the grassy spaces between the garden wall and the public

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road, where the fowls paraded, and the ivy was plaited with periwinkle to the edge of the macadam. These middle-aged houses make no such appeal. They gibber in premature senility, between tragedy and comedy. Nobody will live there now; the gardens are feeble and disordered, and the dahlias fade one by one. Passers by laugh at their "style." Even the creepers have taken no hold of the wall and have fallen dishevelled. I do not believe the former occupants ever come a little way out of their path to see their house. Yonder, were the gaudy doors, and blinds still hanging; the romantic name on the folding gates; and I remembered the autumn rain in which they took heart. Each was the gloomier for the one lamp glimmering near the gate; the soiled crimson leaves were shaken out over the path; the starlings screamed mechanically; the bleared sunset was swallowed up in rain. And in that hour the house, once an anachronism, a mixture of parts of several

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incongruous styles, seemed to have grown very old, and against the wildly moving sky and stars, it gained an indubitable style, that of Stonehenge and the mountain crag—the natural style, the immortal style of things too old.

Beyond these houses lay the Little House, and behind a high exclusive fence, a holly hedge and a lawn. It was empty. Its orchards were praised almost as they deserved, its rent lowered, in advertisements ; nobody came. Yet the lawn was always green ; a gardener—or who ?—kept sharp the angles which it made with the drive. The crocuses came out and lasted till the west wind spilt their petals in the deep grass. The only sign of neglect was the temerity of the ivy, which crept through the chinks of the door, through the keyhole, into the letter-box.

The rooms could be dimly seen from without, especially the great shaded children's nursery that faced the north and has said to me as I have passed :

Rain

"I know the secret of the unhappiness of childhood. A fate abides with me and through her I know the laws that mingle with the roses of life the lilies of death. I have made festal days awful. Many a sad dreamer curses the shadows that he used to see falling on my walls in early firelight."

And it continued until I wished for a Blakes-moor where I could quiet my alarms. As a rule, there was no hint of mysterious inhabitants. The emptiness was far more mysterious. It was wonderful to see how wild the garden looked after a short deser-tion—not disordered or weedy, but wild—though the flowers were of the daintiest and most elaborate kinds. Years ago I heard some one playing the *Didone abandonnata* in The Little House, and in the garden the echoes struck something that repeats them still.

To us, as children, it used to be a famous day when a new tenant came to this house. We had a cruel standard of fitness to apply to whomsoever came. Best of all we liked the ancient who lived in one room of it,

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kept no servants, put up no curtains, and in fact left the house exactly as we wished. We used to hear him singing in a cheerful rasping voice under the big cedar when he thought no one was near. When he quitted it, sitting among his furniture in an open cart, we implored him to stay. For a time we were alternately sorry and pleased at the emptiness of the house. We used to save our pocket money continuously for whole months, to buy the freehold. And so we came to have a sense of possession, if not of occupation, which (we thought) was stronger because it was not known. To the sequestered Sylvans whose escaping foot-steps were heard in very early morning, we prayed

“ Be present aye with favourable feet
And all profane, audience far remove.”

So intimate we grew that the garden seemed to understand us. I would that I could understand it in return.

On Spring days—like this—when a grass

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scent came into the streets as if the fields and woods were insurgent, near at hand, it was to the garden we went, counted daffodils and lime leaves, listening for the new-come martins that sang before they were seen, in the dark. In these early visits we found more in the garden than was in the articles of sale. So we hated the rhododendrons that were planted by a later tenant. He took an interest in the garden that was horrible; frivolous music was played in the house. Nevertheless, in spite of the laughter, the splendour, and the glossy carriage, the house had a defiant air, hating the young gods and goddesses that supplanted the Olympians it once knew. All its peers in the neighbourhood had given way to villas; I thought that perchance it was time for the Little House to go. At evening the thought grew stronger; the house itself cried

“Now mark me how I will undo myself.”

It went on

“God pardon all oaths that are broke to me”

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as if perhaps it knew that I had been vain enough to think I could have lived there happily, as if it cared for the foolish ritual of my sorrow. If it were destroyed, no one could assail my ownership. I might be content. *Car il en est toujours qu'on peut aimer.* . . . Yet I am not sure that I would have possessed it actually. One day two of us were looking over the gate gathering honey with our eyes, when a gracious little girl came smiling towards us ; we slunk away. A little later she surprised us on tiptoe at the same place and at her invitation we entered the garden for the first time. We were persuaded to sit down near the lilacs. But we did not look round ; left alone for a moment, we planned an escape. Even when she came out with a tray and sat beside us, we were not happy. I remember that we whispered together, and the child laughed and tried to put us at our ease. My friend said with a voice of discovery : "They have tea here." We

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were near disillusion ; only, we did not know !

I have said there was a common next to the house. The garden was more ours than that. Independence commonly means a state in which we never know on whom we depend ; the term common was false, and those who walked on it knew no such liberty as we. The garden belonged to us as truly as the world to the children who in a great library, colour the globe, red, green, and blue, for Mary, Arthur and Dick. On the common there were "strange fetters to the feet, strange manacles to the hands." If any should wonder at this let them go to the garden at evening. A half-moon is alone in the sky. Is it green or is it white ? Here and there clusters of poplars vein the horizon. At that hour the waving trees are as delicate as grasses. Some windows are lit. Here a song is ending ; there a door is violently shut ; but already London is growing silent. The sounds are so faint that if I pause to

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listen and unravel them, I can hear my heart, the ticking of my watch, but not the enormous city. Go to the garden and see, in the shadow of a cedar, the apple blossom glow.

A Gentle Craftsman

My friend had twice hooked me ; the parson had risen to a March brown, and in fact been hooked ; but I failed to land, thus losing the only chance of an overflowing creel. For some hours we had been sowing the wind with flies. The busy nut-brown water of the ripples barely wetted the stones, and could not hold a trout. The pools, that had been glass all day, were changed to silver by the great splendour of twilight ; over them now and then wavered a flash as of swords unsheathed for a moment, where the large trout leapt. (Yet the biggest fish of the season had just been landed below us by a clothes-line and a rod like "the mast of some great amiral.") The rise and fall of the green-heart, the tossing of the silk as it

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evolves a perfectly straight line out of subtlest curves, always exert a kind of sorcery, to which your own silence ministers, amid all the jewel and blossom of summer in the grass and air. At twilight the sorcery is reinforced. The mere excellence of casting achieved by that time of day encourages you to go on. And when you stop—perhaps to change a fly—you are too deep in the enchantment to resist.

It had been a day that made us all more than happy, as if it were the beginning of “the world’s great age.” It was well to be there, as we were—

“If the dream lasts ’twill turn the age to gold.”

The twilight was peculiarly fine. A casual passer-by would have detected the hum of gnats, the liquid whisper of poplars, the far-off sea speaking in muffled under-breath, or the snipping sound of bats. We, ourselves, had noticed them at first, and yet, without ceasing, they had mingled and combined into

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the orchestral silenee of summer. Along with the night a mist was eoming, and through it the moon and stars were white. We were easting all the time mechanically, dreamily. Overhead we could hear the lost, mournful voices of plovers that wandered invisible. Insects grew horribly bold, and stayed to be crushed by the hand that was meant to drive them off. The bats eame closer and closer—some of them followed our flies in the air—one, indeed, hooked itself and fell. For a short time there was something diabolie in the air, in the shapes around us, and in the faneies that eame. Was there not an elvish leer traced on the silver bark of the bireh we passed just now? I confess that when a thought of the outer world did eome, it was heartily to wish ourselves at the Three Dragons. There was a sense of stealthy preparation in the silenee. There might be ghosts abroad, or something solemn was happening near at hand. Or were we come suddenly on fairy-land?

A Gentle Craftsman

"This is the fairy land—

We talk with goblins, owls, and elvish sprites,"

As if we had passed into a strange land. We really seemed to be suspected by the things around, for the cattle stepped gradually up to our side, sniffed us, and would not be repulsed. I could scent the fume of a pernicious and alluring herb. Now and then, as before, a fish rose. We longed for the splash to linger, so haunting was the silence become.

A home-returning miner came to our release, and we were glad of his company for a mile. He, too, had observed "something funny" in the air just there. "'Tis the ale at the Three Dragons, I'm thinking," was his conclusion, as he left.

As a fitting anodyne to our experiences, we determined to call on Captain Rowland, a worshipful old man, and master of the gentle craft, who lived near in a great house in a wood, where he cheated *ennui* with some choice books and a cabinet of tea cups,

"With antic shapes in China's azure dy'd."

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The house, indeed, we found, but the Captain was gone. We had forgotten that it was five years since our last meeting. The walls of the garden were levelled and overgrown with moss, the famous "little red apples" were still unpicked. Ivy had dislocated the masonry, and towered above the chimney in a gloomy pavilion of umbrage and flower. The house itself was a possession of nettles. Nothing remained save the superb ancestral turf, whose inconspicuous beauty—like the Captain's antique courtesy—had grown up in the family seat, as the result of peaceful centuries that scarcely raised an echo in the world.

In the village I learned that he was dead. It was hard to learn more, for he was generally loved, and his gamekeeper who knew him best, could not speak of him without distress.

He lived a bachelor in the great old house until he died. At home, he was a sharp-tempered, indolent, yet always occupied man,

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with rosy carbuncled face, who swore freely. It was easier for him to forget than to forgive. “Who could love one that never made an enemy?” was a favourite question of his, to which an answer was not expected. I have noticed also that those who suffered oftenest by his temper loved him best. Yet he was not, in the ordinary sense, a generous man ; his charity began and ended at home.

For days together he would sit in one room, smoking over theology, night-capped, slippers, wearing a waistcoat whose folds were a diary of years past in vigorous characters. Into this faded room he used to summon his household before the dinner-hour, when he read aloud to them—an odd solemnity—a passage from the *Newgate Calendar* in a stormy bass voice. At the more terrible parts the maids were asked to conceal their faces. “Amen,” he bellowed, at the end. “Amen,” whispered the trembling assembly. “And now, if you

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like, you can go to church," was his valediction on Sundays.

He was seldom abroad, save to fish, and out of doors he was metamorphosed. He then invariably wore black clothes, a tall silk hat, and a white cravat. His attitude was in accord. He would sit, amid the Hosannahs of jubilant Nature, as summer passed into the land, like an old tree beside the stream, like a figure in a frieze—

"With marble men and maidens overwrought."

Whilst fishing he never spoke a word, nor would he accept society, though the most sociable of men. "Fishing is fishing," he used to say, elliptically. Youthful and feminine anglers he gravely hated; the latter, I think, because they sometimes laughed aloud in their triumphs. According to the Captain, whatever the *casus belli*, war was declared against fish. The rules of warfare must be obeyed. You must play the game as if (or, the Captain said, "because") your

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opponents were intellectual and moral creatures. A fish accidentally hooked he returned to the water; and yet, I admit, it was his glory to pull the same out again by fair play. It was significantly whispered in the neighbourhood that unless Captain Rowland was out no fish would be caught.

His only fault was his scorn of the *Compleat Angler*. "The old liar," he exclaimed; "but," he said, softening, "a setter of night-lines is beneath contempt." Secretly, I believe, he loved the book. Only he would not countenance the man who was first a lover of the picturesque, and merely, in the second place, an angler. "There are too many of them," was his opinion; "besides, they pick my daffodils and ruin the fruit trees when they ask leave to sit in the orchard and hear the nightingale."

I loved the man for certain invaluable delusions, which formed his philosophy, and, being one of the poor objects of his scorn, I am grateful to him for taking me to many a

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delicate place on the whistling moors—under the woods, in “the morning world’s fresh gold,” or when the noonday heat defrauds the lilies of their dew—and in the meadows beside the still waters.

Digressions on Fish and Fishing

“PRAY to God,” writes William Lawson, commenting on Dennys’s *Secrets of Angling*, in 1653, that *annus mirabilis* of angling—“pray to God with your heart to bless your lawful exercise,” which perhaps explains the triumphs of clerical anglers. In the early Chureh, of course, casting the net was a preliminary and probationary stage to high apostolie placee and catching of souls. Now-adays it may seem that the order is reversed. I have observed that the finest anglers have served their apprenticeship in the Church. Nor would I appear exelusive and non-juring. For by this means the Church, the Roman Church, and Nonconformity are united in delicate union, safe against those controversies of which the episcopal mace is such a pleasant

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symbol. This I may not omit. I see in it the seed of an everlasting Church. Dean Nowel and old Ken should be its fountains of glory, and large already is their posthumous diocese. Yet the curious will raise objections, I foresee. Discord may rise over the culinary issues of the art. In the directions "How to roste a pike," in Walton's seventh chapter, sleep the principles of a broad and a low, a high and a narrow church. Who, for instance, shall decide on the exact quantity expressed by "a little winter savoury" with which he must be seasoned? And he is to be "often basted with claret wine and anchovies and butter mixed together." How often? The question might fill a Bodleian with handsome tomes and remain unanswered. Nor can my piscatorial and reverend friends formulate the doctrine of the true Church on "Let him be roasted very leisurely." The lay mind will doubtless go on being content with mine hostis's cooking of its pike.

To be an angler is something better than

Digressions on Fish and Fishing

to be a “very honest man.” But not all his critics have the same lofty expectations of the angler as old John Dennys. Often, indeed, they must needs imitate that great-hearted African kinglet who demanded a tribute of scarlet apparel, yet was well content with two or three bottles of brandy. His virtues, according to Dennys, are twelve, a glorious number, though not without a hint of calamity. The first of these is Faith—

“Not wavering and unstable,
But such as had that holy patriarch old.”

It makes a noble sound. Then follow Hope, and Love (*i.e.*, a “liking to the game”), and fourthly Patience; but though I admire the fisherman’s patience, I admirc the fish’s more. After “low Humility” and Strength comes Liberality—

“Like to that ancient hospitality
That sometime dwelt in Albion’s fertile land.”

But alas! he means only feeding the fish “with full and plenteous hand,” a proceeding

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near allied to a confession of incapacity. Knowledge and "Placability of Mind" ("contented with a reasonable dish") and "Thanks to God" lead on to a virtue that involves nearly all the rest, viz., "Fasting long," for it is in his articles that he must

"Never on his greedy belly think
From rising sun until alow he sink."

Lovers of quietness and good ale, be patient. The last is Memory, so as not "to leave something behind forgetfully." We have sometimes found bad memory a boon. It frees the conscience and stimulates the brain, and is of singular efficacy after a tedious day.

Some objectors to the godliness of angling may be found. Many years ago, I remember to have met a superannuated preacher of some rigid sect in Wales, who had exchanged quite naturally his symbolical crook for rod and line. A fine patriarchal vision he was when going a-fishing. "Go to chapel, you young fool . . . go to chapel; you're no fisherman, though maybe you will become a fisher of

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men," was his pastoral advice to a Sunday sportsman who lost a good pike before his eyes. He himself grew into a famous Sabbath rod in his later days, "still," as he used to say, looking back on his long career, "still the only man that did not rest on the seventh day." His venerable aspect and great renown were long his protection in these offences. But one day, an "elder," a sitter for half a century in the "great seat" below the pulpit, and yet virgin as to Dennys and Walton, quietly hinted that old — might be better employed. The spring twilight was growing cold, and all the land, with its congresses of mighty trees, looked solemn in the silence that reaches the ear of God. A big trout was tumbling in the deeps. But the old man tucked his rod under his arm and left the bank. Placing his rod and his catch in the vestry, he entered the chapel, and, even truer to his craft than the excellent Dean Nowel, preached in his steaming boots. That sermon, with the text "He taketh up all of

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them with the angle," is famous still. But the old man was right. He should have been allowed to go on and "cast all his sins into the depths." He was too feeble for the excitements of the fierce Welsh oratory. Not very long after he "fell asleep in peace," threading a bait beside the waters.

And another reverend angler I knew in Wales, whom I may not forget. There was a singular finish and eadenee about the courses of his life. He himself would call it modestly "a beautiful blank, like a fair sheet of paper unsmeared by art." He was born in a cottage whose wall rose sheer from a bank where a little river died in the surges of a tumultuous estuary. His boyhood and manhood were spent partly in another cottage whose garden slopes to the same river, but chiefly in the river itself, he being a famous truant in those days. When he came to the years that bring ennui and the philosophic mind, he wrote verse; and when, according to the happy Cambrian custom, he used a

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bardic name, he took it from the stream whose sound was ever in his ears, and which—being no “swan,” but just a merry sandpiper—he tamed to suit the dainty melodies of his verses. In one of his best lyrics—I think they are his; anyhow, his frequent repetition made them his own—he put his own wild heart into the cry of the river, as it turned and seemed in places to lose its way, ever with its heart set towards the sea: “The sea! the sea evermore.” He was, he said, no more than Carlyle’s minnow, “Far from the maine-sea deepe.” Yet his soul went out to the sea, to the great matters of the world, ever giving these reality and colour by references to the little river and its copses, that furnished his house of thought with the metaphors by which he lived. He was one of the few genuine fishing philosophers I ever knew. One who will sit through a shower under a tree, discoursing, “And on the world and his Creator think,” is apt to catch no fish. Most of my angling philosophers

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bought their fish of the village barber, who kept them in a bucket.

Some fishermen are great readers out of doors, with a taste which argues (unless the result of gross insensibility) no mean judgment and knowledge of books. To know what will stand the fierce outdoor light that hopelessly demeans the average book is a literary achievement. In this way the sun is a true critic, and the only present test of immortality. Sir Thomas Browne wears well out of doors. So, strange to say, does Elia, probably because he did late justice to Andrew Marvell, though Hazlitt will have it that Lamb was the worst company on a walk. Among modern books, I think the sun likes best *Sunningwell*, with its delicious quiet, and that delicate book of verses *Ionica*. Richard Jefferies does not go quite well with the red sun wine and all the pompous investiture of summer; nor, I humbly think, does Thoreau. One humourist, indeed, I heard of, who swore that he had killed more

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fish with *Walden* than the Limerick bend. But, as a rule, the books that fill baskets are not these ; they are best read away from the sights and sounds which they are magically fitted to recall. Others that are sweet out of doors are old-fashioned poetry, and things which have in them elements of weakness and decay and will “grow old along with you,” not competing with their surroundings, but soon wearing into a likeness to them, as I have seen a ship’s fantastic figure-head lie moss-covered in an old garden among the pansies. One companion will swear by an odd volume of verses published by Dodsley ; in fact, those eighteenth century verses will sometimes gain wonderfully by the voices of birds and waters which they so lack. One old countryman I knew would always have Culpeper by his side. But perhaps the book is better away. Or let it lie among the tackle and bait, where it will at least do more good than “the marrow of the thigh-bone of a heron.”

Hengest: A Kentish Study

HENGEST is a gardener of Kent, whom I first met when amber was lingering in the maple leaves of a long past autumn. He looks as if he might have conquered worlds ; in fact, he has chosen to conquer the individualities of flowers and to leave no Roman peace amongst them ; and in the last of the decades that are given to us, or perhaps the first which we have to wrest for ourselves, he admits that he has failed. Standing hardly six feet high, he looks a great rather than a big man. He bends—he has been bending all his life—with a gracious stoop that also expresses craft and eagerness to move, as of a runner crouching at the start. His hair and beard are furze-brushes ; the large, quiet eyes are like sweet birds hiding therein. His

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chest is so ample that to see him walking reminds me of the verse: "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." Yet he has spent all that part of life which he cares to talk about, in growing columbines and wistaria, in providing for sweet-williams and tea roses. His gardening always seems an infinite condescension. I wonder how he can forbear to crush with his craggy hand the little plants that are so often recalcitrant. Alexander the Great listening to music, or Cæsar playing at love, would not give a more perfect picture of repose than Hengest watering the tender Malabar nut or culling garden seeds on a choice August eeventide. With his great eyes, too, he is something of a natural poet. Yet I think the magnificent "overhanging firmament," the white immobile or flying clouds, and the glorious paths of sun and moon, impress him very lightly. I could never persuade him to take such delight in the silver and gold of a summer twilight as he obviously

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takes in pruning jessamine late in March, turning his back upon a league of awful woods set amidst delicate fields. Notwithstanding, he will talk of simple garden things and of his own countryside, with a sort of dignified, intimate knowledge, as if verily he were Groom of the Stole to Nature's self. I have sometimes made far-off and, as it were, purposely ill-aimed hints, that flowers were rather small deer for a man of his style. His replies are worthy of a Hengest who is content to be called "Ichabod Larkin, Florist"—with the letters all reversed by the hamlet artist, who has never realised that *d* becomes *b* when printed from a block. I gather that his subtle trafficking in trifles was originally of deliberate choice, and that the Hengest lies buried alive under the coat of Ichabod Larkin, as if it had had a tiny parchment label with a sonorous name tied to it, like the roses in the garden. He looks now a young man, though he has always in a sense been old, as most gardeners are perchance; for by a

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paradox of Nature, youth, that has the whole of life before it, cannot contemplate with equanimity the long years that are as a day's sun to the surface of a lawn or the grain of an oak. The old man, rather than the young man, can plant (and not water with tears) a tree that will never be glorious to his eyes. Hengest has resolved, as he explained in one of his replies, quoting almost his only author, not to be "busy in actions that were done under the sun, rather than those under the shade." I have been sceptical at times as to the complete ingenuousness of Hengest. Perhaps he has been harshly driven to his philosophy? I cannot say; but certainly there are rumours ever on the lips of his friends, and there is an empty seaboard over the mantelpiece at his home, decently draped by texts; there are a few brilliant buttons still to be seen amongst others on his drab coat. If it is so; if in the past he was a soldier of rank, still more is his bearing to be admired; and his humble services take on

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something of the pathos of that famous act of Charles V., who, after his resignation of an empire, called in vain for a servant to conduct an ambassador from his presence, and himself bore the candle out to the gate of the palace. If I throw out any hints on this point, he says that he would rather not be considered as the carcass of a fine gentleman. Then he falls back on his trenches. He speaks of a garden as of a microcosm, laughing to scorn the outsiders who count one flower like another. No two flowers are alike. Out of this knowledge he has gained a kind of charity towards flowers, and (I might say) a reverent humility. He has come to me, wringing his hands, to announce that a certain beautiful dahlia was proud and would not "listen" to him. Even as to weeds, he early taught me the variety of their opposition, from the deep-rooted dock to which deliberate siege must be laid, to the speedwells that wage a guerilla warfare, and the traveller's joy that with its gallant flowers and plumy fruit is the light cavalry of

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the weeds. As some old Puritan or imaginative Welsh Calvinist would dwell upon the world of spirits until in every detail it became alive, splendid and terrible, so, yet not solely in fancy, he has evolved a scheme of the universe of flowers, passionate, intelligent, enjoying and suffering, but hard for the common eye to apprehend, because they are slow with a kind of abstract slowness. The result of his loving study is not in every way profitable. He lets time slip away; he seems to deal in centuries and could find work which would wear out æons. Years ago, he lost a comfortable post because he had spoiled all the gardenias by a too curious observation of the difference made by planting gladiolas (I think they were gladiolas) in their neighbourhood. But his best things are prodigious. Here again his head is at fault. He can only by extreme threats be lured to give up his finest flowers. Out of his own small cantele of the nursery he will sell nothing, and hardly ever give anything:

Hengest: A Kentish Study

it is therefore the astonishment of the countryside. To several artifices this remarkable perfection is ascribed. It is said, for example, that when he sees a peerless plant in his wanderings, he gathers a seed or two, and puts them in his poeket. There the seeds remain, until moist and well-favoured they sprout forth to the sun. Whatever their origin, these plants are even nearer than his pocket to his heart. When a fire once burnt house and garden, he was overwhelmed, until next spring the flowers came up near the ruins, sown by the flames where they were cruellest. Burnishing his days with patient labour, he has little need for other companions than dwell among green leaves. I do not believe he was ever in love with anything save a rose. Certainly he never hated anything but a weed. Of men he rarely makes a judgment, though he once remarked that gentlemen had one fault: "They won't do what they are told," a vice of which he is often the prey. Seeing

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little society that is not floral, his charity towards his fellows is exceeding great. He says, despite his knowledge of bees, "a man is as good as a bee, may-be," with all the air of one publishing a discovery.

Two Scholars

MAGICAL powers like those imputed to the flesh of mummies abide in the languages we call dead. They have the mystery of death,—of resurrection, too,—of a perpetual life in death, not due to the disentombing of antiquaries, but to the loyalty of one distinguished class. This class of scholars truly is magnificently repaid. *Vitai lampada tradunt.* Without them the lamp would have fallen and expired. They, like vestals, dwell apart, keep ever burning the holy fire, and claim their immunities. The glories of the languages haunt also their husbands-men.

Nothing so troubled the old Roman, troubled him even in his grave, as a thought that the rites of the hearth might be neglected,

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and offerings to dead ancestors left unbrought. Therefore a sanctity awaited the heir that fulfilled these duties ; and even such a sanctity clothes the scholar that cherishes their ancient speech. Yet the glory about him is like the glory of fire in a lampless room,—that “counterfeits a shade.” For it is pathetic that the language in which

“Saintly Camillus lived and firm Atilius died,” that the language of those who fought at Marathon, should, if they have not perished, no longer be transmitted with the mother’s milk to her son. Their posterity cannot read their epitaphs. Montaigne was nursed by one who spoke Latin, and he heard nothing save that tongue around his cradle ; but it was not in his blood ; he records, in fact, that his Latin gradually degenerated, until he lost the use of it. In this way, the handling of Greek and Latin gives a solemnity, a touch of pathos, to the scholar. But he is often poor. The words that would lay open the gates of

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heaven are impotent at the tradesman's door.
The world calls Greek—

“Greek in a hut, with water and a crust,
—Learning, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust.”

Still, learning is not ill paid. If it were, so also would the martyr be, and mighty poets that have died before their fame was born. He that soweth roses must not look for apples, or even poppies. “Aristotle is more known than Alexander,” says Demoeritus Junior, “yet I stand not upon this; the delight is what I aim at; so great pleasure, such sweet content, there is in study.” It is much to speak the tongue that Shakespeare spoke, but more perhaps to speak the tongue of Greece that gave light, and Rome that gave fire, to the world. The scholar has upon his lips imperial accents. When I speak a line of Greek I seem to taste neetar and ambrosia. As in Heine’s fable the eagle of Jupiter was with him, antiquated and mournful though it might be, in his exile on a northern island; so the eagle accompanies the scholar.

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There is ever something ideal in the “dead languages.” They cannot be invaded, but remain crystallized immortally. *Cæsar semper Augustus* were words of incantatory effect on mediæval ears ; and the sound of Greek falls freshly upon the mind, with a surprise, still as great as to the scholars of the Renaissance when Learning returned from her Babylonish captivity. So much so that we often praise the classic for a thought which in a modern would perhaps draw little attention. For the medium is as divine as marble ; and we might say with Michelangelo, of certain modern works, “If this were to become marble, alas for the antiques.” De Quincey forgets his assumed contempt for the classical world when he remembers the sound of *ἐπομπεύε*, or *Consul Romanus*. . . .

I remember once, travelling in a southern county of England, coming across a servant who, even without his melancholy, seemed no ordinary man, and spoke with a kind of splendour that was new to me. He was tall,

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and had been straight, but now walked with a majestic stoop, though like Vulcan he limped. He was past middle age, his woes were of the kind that invite expressions of sympathy. On my inquiring what might be his misfortune, he answered in tones so carefully modulated as to appear half satiric, “Eheu ! mater mea obiit hodie. O causa meæ vivendi sola senectæ.” The words, however, seemed to carry their own balm ; his face glowed continually, as we talked for several minutes together, without a word that would have made Quintilian stare and gasp. His thoughts moved gracefully in a pomp of altisonant syllables. Sometimes he spoke English, but returned happily to Latin in the flashes of humour with which he referred to the university,—when, for example, he spoke of a languishing literary society (that had expelled him for a freak of classicism) as equalling the number of the good, and no more—

“vix numero sunt totidem, quot
Thebæ portarum vel divitis Ostia Nili.”

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- He felt like a swallow kept among the starlings of a cold clime, while his fellows had flown eastward. . . . When I last heard of him, he was earning his bread by the composition of advertisements for a firm of merchants, and thus at last he found a subject matter adaptable to his peculiarly florid but melodious eloquence. I recognized with a sigh more than one of his favourite mighty words thus fallen.

In C—shire, I know a hamlet (a mere handful of houses) that lies, dimly seen below the high-peaked road, like a cluster of straw beehives, under a great wood. Even these few houses are divided from one another by several tiny streams, that run in and out like gay, live things. Thither I descended one twilight from the hills, to buy honey from a cottager. It was August. Across the road went a stream, a tinkling chain of silver beads, presently buried in trees, on which the uncertain light was mixed with shade. Here and there were sombre alders, noisy still with

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the delicate southern voices of invisible birds
Here and there were poplars with a sound,
not of running water, but of rain (the shower
apparently dying away now and then as the
wind fluctuated). And in the sunset among
those enormous hills a bell was ringing out a
melancholy sweet *sic transit*. . . . There was
some light outside, but none in the low room,
where the beekeeper was writing. He rose
and greeted us with a bow. Then he left us,
after lighting a candle for our good, and one
for his own use in a loft where the honey was
stored. The wooden frame, gray from the
touch of his hands, was contrasted with the
dewy, amber eells. While we were comple-
ting the purchase, and talking, he surprised
us by answering in Latin, *Omnibus una*
quies, etc., which Dryden has rendered
thus :—

“Their toil is common, common is their sleep ;
They shake their wings when morn begins to
peep ;
Rush thro’ the city gates without delay ;
Nor ends their work but with declining day.”

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Pronounced by a mellow elegiac voice, this speech interested us profoundly.

Next day we went again with a freshened memory of the Georgics. He was never once at a loss, though we seldom spoke except in hexameters of Virgil. He had lived a large, roaming life, full of outward adventure, chiefly on the plains of America. Thither he had gone in his youth, accomplished in nothing but books, and those Latin and Greek. Notwithstanding, he had amassed great wealth. Of this a mighty accident—a prairie fire, or some such insurrection of the elements—had all but despoiled him, and he came home at the end of middle life to Wales. There he took to bee farming. Economy and hard work had made his life comfortable, and might have made it luxurious, for he was said to be rich. He remained unmarried. He had no kinsmen. He made no friends : two aged women of the hamlet were accustomed to tend him in occasional sicknesses. For the rest, he was contented, if not happy, with his

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bees and a few books, mainly Delphin classics. The bees would answer his call as they answered the smitten brass ; and only when thus engaged on a tranquil summer evening did he betray a mellow complacency, except when with his books. He took pleasure in Claudian's verses on the sirens ; Virgil, however, was his dearest author. Virgil was his oracle in all matters ; he practised *sortes Virgilianæ* : to him, rhyme was reason. His life was almost perfectly that of a scholar. After adventure, after witnessing the downfall of kings, and great peoples embattled one against another, after shipwreck and scenes of violent death, he concluded that

“the tears of Imogen
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-days of Empires.”

He finds a refuge from the shadows of the world among the realities of books.

But, says one, your knowledge is nothing until another has acknowledged it. He contradicts that entirely. He knows that at least

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intellectual pleasure and the dulcitudes of a sanc self-approval are by no means like snowflakes in the river, and that real joy holds within itself the germs of an endless self-reproduction. Electra, Aspasia, Lesbia, are sweet friends to him, when Orcstes and Pericles and Catullus have been many centuries underground. Cæsar is nearer to him than Napoleon, and Thyrsis nearer than either. Experience has not impaired or clogged his imagination. If it has taught him anything, it has taught him the worth of silence. We often found him by the river, "dazed," in Virgilian phrase, "by the mighty motion of the tide." He told us himself that he was often "drunk with silence." In such moments, as we afterwards learned, he had monitions of an after life—monitions arising merely, it may be, from a thought that from things with which he was in completest sympathy no separation was possible. He was to become part of the viewless winds. No writing of his remains; and it is improbable that he

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was ever satisfied with his attempts. But, with what is perhaps the true spirit of the scholar, he laughs at the notion that to expect the approbation of posterity is uncon-soling and vain. With a touch of pleasantry, he said, on one of my visits : " My door is not strong enough to keep out the feeblest person in the hamlet ; yet when I close it, I effectually shut out the whole world ; like Heinsius, I bolt the door, excluding ambition, passion, desire, the children of ignorance and nurslings of sloth, and in the very bosom of eternity I sit down with a supreme content in the company of so many famous minds, that I compassionate the mighty who know naught of this my felicity." Yes ! " in the bosom of eternity," anticipating and making little of death. When we last parted, " Death," he said, " always brings into my mind those closing verses of the last Eclogue,

'Ite domum saturæ — venit Hesperus — ite capellæ !'"

Broken Memories

"Mr —— the well-known merchant, is building a fine house, half a mile from the —— Road. Close upon two acres of woodland have been felled, where, by the way, the largest and juiciest blackberries I know used to be found."—*London Local Newspaper.*

AND in this way many suburbans have seen the paradise of their boyhood effaced. The building rises during some long farewell, and steals away a fraction of the very sky in which once we beheld Orion sink down like a falling sword into the west and its line of battlemented woods. Only here and there a coppice will survive, blockaded by houses a-row. Sometimes a well-beloved pleasure is left almost as it was ; the trees are the same ; the voices are the same ; a silence is there still ; but there is a caret somewhere—in ourselves or in the place. In childhood

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we went there as often as our legs could bear us so far; oftener yet in youth; but less and less with time. Then, perhaps, we travel—anyway we live feverishly and variously; and only think of the old places when the fire is tranquil and lights are out, and “each into himself descends,” or when we meet one who was once a friend, or when we lay open a forgotten drawer. A very slender chain only binds us to the gods of forest and field—but binds us nevertheless. Then we take the old walk, it may be, in a walking suit of the best; fearful of mire; carrying a field-glass too; and smoking the pipe that used to seem an insult so intolerable in the great woods. We take the old walk, and it seems shorter than before, a walk not formidable at all, as it was in the years when the end used to find us testy with fatigue and over-powered by tumultuous impressions; when we ourselves thought the sea itself could not be far, and the names of village and hill we visited were unknown.

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A railway bisects the common we cross. Everything is haggard and stale ; the horizon is gone ; and the spirit chafes and suffocates for lack of it. (But the gorse is in flower still.) Then the feet weary on gravel paths downhill. On either side are fields, edged by flaccid suburban grass, with an odour as of tombs—as though nothing fair could blossom in a soil that must be the sepulchre of many divinities. And again the pathway is dogged by houses, interrupting the fields. The former sanity and amenity of air is gone. We can no longer shorten the way to the next houses by a path from the willowy riverside over fields, for the willows are down, the fields heavily burdened with streets. Another length of mean houses, neither urban nor rustic, but both, where I remember the wretched children's discordant admiration of the abounding gold hair of a passer-by ; and soon the bridge over a railway gives a view across plantations of cabbage, etc. But the view is comforting—there is an horizon !

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There is an horizon barred with poplar trees to the south ; the streets are behind, in the north. The horizon is dear to us yet, as the possible home of the unknown and the greatly desired, as the apparent birthplace and tomb of setting and rising suns ; from under it the clouds mount, and under it again they return after crossing the sky. A mystery is about it as when we were children playing upon a broad, treeless common, and actually long continued running in pursuit of the horizon.

After three miles in all we leave the turnpike, to follow a new but grassy road out among the fields, under lines of acacia and poplar and horse-chestnut last. Once more the ploughland shows us the twinkling flight of pewits ; the well, and the quaking water uplifted in a shining band where it touches the stones ; the voices of sparrows while the trees are dripping in the dawn ; and overhead the pompous mobilisation of cloud armadas, so imposing in a country where

Broken Memories

they tilt against ebony boughs. . . . In a thicket some gipsies have encamped, and two of them—superb youths, with favours of raven hair blowing across the dusky roses of their cheeks—have jumped from their labour to hear the postman reading their letters. Several pipe-sucking bird-eatchers are at watch over an expanse of nets. We cross a ploughland half within the sovereignty of the forest shadow. Here is the wood!

The big wood we called it. So well we knew it, and for so many years—wandered here with weeping like Imogen's, and with laughter like Yorick's laughter—that when past years bulk into the likeness of a forest, through which the memory takes its pleasure at eventide,

“Or in clear dream or solemn vision,”

it is really this wood that we see, under a haleyon sky.

It covered two acres in the midst of ploughland; but we thought of it as enor-

Broken Memories

mous, because in it we often lost one another ; it had such diversity ; it made so genuine a solitude. The straight oaks rising branchless for many feet expanded and then united boughs in a firmament of leaves. It seemed far enough from London for feelings of security. But even of that our thoughts have changed ; for the houses are fearfully close—a recollection of them lingers in the heart of the wood ; and perhaps they will devour it also. . . . Who shall measure the sorrow of him that hath set his heart upon that which the world hath power to destroy, and hath destroyed ? Even to-day the circuit of a cemetery is cutting into the field where we gathered buttercups before the dignity of knickerbockers. . . . And here was a solitude. We cannot summon up any thought or reverie which had not in this wood its nativity. 'Tis we have changed ! And if we could paint, and wished to make a picture of our youth with its seriousness and its folly, we should

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paint in this wood, instead of in a hostel-yard, another Don Quixote watching his armour all night after the false accolade.

The dark earth itself was pleasant to handle—earth one might wish to be buried in—and had the healthy and special quality of wild earth: upon it you could rest deliciously. (Compare the artificial soil of a London common with it!) Out of this rose up trees that preserved their wild attitudes. The age-fallen or tempest-uprooted oak tree lay where it dropped, or hung balanced in the boughs of others. Tenderest bramble spray or feeler of honeysuckle bridged those gaps in the underwood that served as paths. And the winds were husbandmen, reapers and sowers thereof. Though, indeed, the trees were ordered with an incongruous juxta-position of birch and oak and elm, it seemed to us a fragment of the primæval forest left by a possible good fortune at the city verge. But it was more than this. With its lofty roof and the mysterious flashes

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of light in the foliaged clerestory, with its shapely boles in cluster and colonnade, and the glimpses of bright white sky that came and went among the leaves, the forest had a real likeness to a temple. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and passages of Adonais were the *ediscenda* of our devotions.

Here we saw the grim jewellery of winter on fallen leaf and bow of grass ; gold and purple colouring inseparable from the snow upon boughs overhead ; the hills far away sombre and yet white with snow ; and on the last of the icy mornings, the sward beaming with melted frost, and the frost only persisting on the ample shadows with which the trees stamp the grass. Here we saw the coming of Spring, when the liquid orb'd leaves of toad-flax crept out of a barren stone. Full of joy we watched here the "sweet and twenty" of perfect Summer, when the matin shadows were once deleted, and the dew-globes evaporated from the harebell among the fern, or twinkled as they

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fell silently underfoot. But the favourite of memory is a certain flower - shadowing tree whose branches had been earthward bent by the swinging of boyish generations. Foliage and shadow muffled the sight, and seated there in profound emerald moss, the utmost you achieved was to find a name for each of the little thicket flowers. If you raised your head you would have seen in a tumultuous spasm of sunshine—say at mid March—the blue smoke upcoiling between the boughs of overhanging trees far off and dissipated in the dashing air; the trees shining in their leaflessness like amber and dark agate; above that the woodland seared in black upon the heated horizon blue;—but you never raised your head. For hours you could here have peace, among the shadows embroidered with flowers of the colour of gold. All which tantalises—sun and clouds and for ever inaccessible horizon—was locked out; only (like a golden bar across a gloomy coat of arms) one sunbeam across the brown

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wood ; thrushes and blackbirds warbled unseen. The soul—this made a cage bird of it. The eagle's apothecosis in the fires of the sun was envied not. What a subtle diversity of needle herbs and grass there is in the plainest field carpet ! all miniature after close cropping of rabbit and sheep ; auriferous dandelion, plumed self-heal, dainty trefoil, plantain, delicate feathered grasses, starry blossomed heather, illuminations of tormentil, unsearchable moss forests, and there jewelled insects, rosy centaury ; nearly all in flower together, and the whole not deep enough to hide a field-mouse.

A dim solitude thus circumscribed liked us hugely. We loved not the insolent and importunate splendours of perfect light. Cobwebs and wholesome dust—we needed some of both in the corners of our minds. They mature the wine of the spirit perhaps. We would always have had, as it were, a topmost and nearly inaccessible file of tomes, which we never read, but often planned to

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read—records peradventure of unvictorious alchymist and astrologer. Thither a sunbeam never penetrated and unmasked. The savour of paraffin and brick-dust should never cling about it. Unfortunate (we thought) is he who has no dusty and never-explored recesses in his mind!

Isoud with the White Hands

THAT road could lead nobody to Rome. The only village that it passed was a mere gap in the long hedge, holding a parson, two or three fools, and a sense of ancient peace. Then it entered gently into the secret places of the land. On either side the fields and woods lay open; surprised but not alarmed by so tranquil an intrusion, they were beheld in all their divinity. The hedges of the road were so low, that only at a hill-top was the waving honeysuckle seen against the silver sky of noon or the azure of night. Over-head the oaks joined hands; through their close leaves the fractions of shining sky came and went like stars while I moved; and when the foliage of one tree met without touching the next, a blade of sky, like a

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sword gently unsheathed, was described by the long lines of scalloped leaves. The trees were silent, saving when they found a voice in one of the birds whose faint songs are part of the melodious quiet of summer.

Not too often, cottages grew (they seemed to grow) beside the road, and their gossipy hollyhocks curtsied in looking over the hedge. Against the white wall, brave peonies looked cool. Rose bushes stood at the borders of the path in command of wild-flower beds, that nevertheless slipped through with a strand of delicate bellied toadflux, or one blossom of pimpernel like a volcanic flame between the pebbles. Sometimes the precious-looking Morello cherries lay ardent as flame and cool as dew in the heat of a southern wall. In another place the latent splendour of fifty summers had escaped and spent itself in hiding the cottage with roses. A yew tree more rarely stood at one side, and within its influence, though not within its shadow, was a nunnery of white flowers. The cottages—

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of grotesque mixtures of black oak and whitened stone, or of golden brick—and the sombre inhabitants were in contrast with the exuberant many-coloured, many-thoughted flowers, which yet, at times, arrayed these men and women with a divine garment. Here and there, larger houses shone through a skilful veil of holm-oaks and bays. They never seemed to be aboriginal like the cottages, but to be visitors, lightly planted in the soil. For some distance around these, the wild trees had withdrawn, standing, at the edges of a road, with that continuous motion and murmur of their branches that gives these sentinels a timorous expression, as if they had crept out into the light and, becoming afraid, tried vainly to retire.

Every two or three miles a by-road set out on either side, underneath elms and abeles, and after carrying the eye delightfully for a space, deceived it at last among the shadows of many trees.

One by-road went to a lifeless mill, a tall

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house with upper windows of ample prospect. Above the wheel the waters no longer slid fast with awful repose, but cried and leapt through the broken flood-gates into a pool in the shadow of steep banks and underwood. The house was peopled only by the beautiful machinery of polished wood, now still and morose. The wheel too was still. Callosities of dry moss on the spokes, little by little, took the place of the weed which the river had combed into such excellence. And I could not but wonder that these things had, according to Hecuba's wish, voices "in hands and feet and hair," the eloquence of death. The place would have been sad, had it not been for the meadow cranesbill at the door, a mournful flower, but here, as part of the ceremonial of decay by which this desolation was made perfect, it left one thought, "How beautiful is death." Each evening, just when the first nightjar was skimming the wood, the sedge-warblers began to sing all together round the pool. The song might

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have been the abstract voice of some old pain, feebly persistent. It went far into the night with a power of ghostly alarms, and attuned to such thoughts as come when night in certain places is malign, reverses the sweet work of the day, and gives the likeness of a dragon to the pleasant corner of a wood. The birds were full of preclusive dark sayings about the approaching night.

The footpath by the mill was fading away, for it now led to nowhere—whither few cared to follow it. Possibly the last step may soon linger among the encroaching flowers, the rank growths of willowherb, tansy, and betony which, poor enough by themselves, make the thicket sumptuous by their profusion. And who took the first step? Someone in the days when, wherever you went you came to nowhere. For there are few footpaths that are new, and those that are old may be drowned or cut to pieces, or may be incorporated (as De Quincey has said) in someone's kitchen, but seem never to die, and the

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more they are down-trodden the more they flourish. Curiosity as to whether Shakespeare ever started one is idle. They are footprints, perhaps, of the immortals. They are vestiges of that older day when this land also "was in Arcady." Even to-day they may be seen, after rising and falling in the fields, to be gathered into that far country again, where hills like clouds and clouds like hills are mingled beneath the white sun of noon.

One of these paths entered a lane which suddenly ceased, and round the corner was the kingdom of heaven at my feet—the Kentish weald, just grass and corn and trees, and like jewels on that delicate cloth, a white hamlet or an auburn farmhouse with oast-houses around. These conical buildings give parts of Kent a unique geniality. They are of many hues—dull red, yellow, and the colour of pomegranate rind; they may be seen of the tint of good toast. Something of the ruddiness of earth, as it is found in ripe wheat, in October leaves, and in the

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lotus flower, has penetrated the brick, and expresses the lust of the earth for a gaudier flora. The oast-house is indeed among the Lares on the vast hearth of the sun, and on gloomiest days it has its divinity. In a fine haze that genial, and, as it were, indoor humour of Kent is complete. The haze which comes with sudden heat after rain in April, and that with which September, or even June, chooses to veil her splendour, both are elements in the characteristic scenes. They have also a special goodness for the mind, for those above all

“That soar but never roam.”

By seeming to confine the outlook on which their silken fringes have fallen, they enlarge the sight, which an infinite view is apt to distract and dissipate. Shutting out the few miles immediately about us, they let in the worlds and starry spaces to the inward eye. When they cannot do this, they build up an incomparable prison ; and as the inmate

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moves, the moving walls invite him to a happy expectation of more than liberty. In all seasons the presence of the oast-house amid the haze is like that of a wood fire such as burns continually in many farmhouses ; so that even in March the hollows are like great kitchens, with a gentle sense of home. In autumn I have seen gipsies and other vagrants going to sleep under the moon. There was an oast-house at the end of their lane, two more on the slopes above. Their fire was out and their clothes were thin. Yet there seemed nothing extraordinary in the act. I wondered why I was going farther to sleep. The maternity of the earth is never so attractive as at that time and in Kent. Fruit abounds ; there are rabbits for the carnivorous. A sparkling liquor may be lifted from the spring. The heather or grass is an airy, dry and comfortable paliasse, and out of doors you are never late for breakfast. So well was I entertained, that I almost breathed a grace when I tasted the air or

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saw the tench rolling at nightfall among the lilies.

Near the mill another path branched into a park. The sea of turf was occupied by great oaks and the shadows of oaks. In one part the gardener had planted cypress, justly confident in the effect of these pillars of darkness seen against a hot blue sky, auburn roofs and the pale grass. The shadows of the trees fell upon me as I entered the park, and filled me with solemn thought. I cannot walk under trees without a vague powerful feeling of reverence. Calmly persuasive, they ask me to bow my head to the unknown god. In the evening, especially, when the main vocation of sight is to suggest what eyes cannot see, the spacious and fragrant shadow of oak or pine is a temple which seems to contain the very power for whose worship it is spread.

For a time the sky was grey with thoughts of rain. The small birds twittered nervously in the wood below; the ring doves came

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home gleaming in the humid horizontal beams. But presently all that was left of the grey was a tenderness in the golden light. From among the trees I could see a pool at the foot of a sloping lawn, and a swan moving to and fro so nobly, that I should have thought she was borne by the water, if that had not been as still as ice. The colours of the sunset were doubled in the pool—with something added, as things are seen in dreams. The turf had a perfume peculiarly nourishing to the fancy, and which, giving contentment, is on the side of the old doctors who commended the alimentary “virtues” of scents.

As quietly as the night was coming, and as benignly, something floated under the trees, turning an unknown face towards me; then passed away as softly as the day was fading. I just saw the pale glorious face. A bevy of dainty spaniels followed her soberly, as if to make up for the state which did not encircle her out of doors.

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She herself was, like a cherub by Reynolds, only a perfect face flying in the air ; and about her was a sense of inaudible harps. . . . Could she be the face that had been as a benediction, when I stared and was baffled and stared again into the meaningless London crowd ? For a day or two such a remembered face has sometimes been a guardian genius of my ways ; the delirium of seeing the thousand faces again when I had fallen asleep was comforted by the one, though utterly unknown, and never in reality to reappear. Was she one of those holy ones met again by divine good chance ? She, too, has revisited my closed eyes. Or perhaps she was the “angel” of a heroine from my childish books, one of those of whom I fancied that I should seek their faces in the shadows, and should not be happy, or contented with my sorrow, until I saw them once more. At times she has come to me as that sweet saint, Dwynwen of Wales. Unfortunate in her innocent

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passion, Dwynwen was restored to tranquillity in sleep. The friendly Deity also promised her the fulfilment of any three wishes. She chose therefore that the sentence against her hostile lover should be revoked ; that all true lovers should triumph or be healed ; and that she (it was her only ungenerous choice) should never wish to be married. She afterwards took the veil and became a saint, and if the true lover called upon her, he was cured or satisfied. She became traditionally an Aphrodite, beautiful and unpolluted. And a saint, gently befriending pure affection, my apparition certainly must have been. But although visionary smiles have answered me when I called upon her spirit as Dwynwen, she came in the end to embody perfectly my fancies of Isoud with the White Hands. In the "Morte D'arthur" she and her gallant, mournful brother, the knight Kehydius, are but as ghosts of desperate longing amid all those knights and queens, so brilliant even in their tragedies. Kehydius loved La

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Beale Isoud; but, if unsuccessful, he was happy in comparison with his white sister. "He," says Malory, "died for love." She lived on, as if death scorned such easy victory. In the "*Morte D'arthur*," she fades out of sight, and, like a revenant in her faint life, we may think of her as continuing so, and here crossing my path among these fields, in the likeness of a girl, merely pure and beautiful, and a little sad, like Isoud with the White Hands.

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